

Sunday

Week 9. Restoring Peace With the Culture

Increasingly we are all traumatized by a culture of violence and uncertainty that is eroding our capacity to trust in the world. Children killing children in high school cafeterias. Random drive-by shootings. Workplace gunfire. Terrorist violence. Ecological crises of unprecedented proportions. The wars. Environmental toxins. It's enough to drive us all crazy.

Needless suffering affects all of us as the morning news unfolds the contamination of cruelty, horror, greed, and indifference. These kinds of stories challenge whether our faith has meaning in real life.

The relationship between the state of our culture and the soundness of your emotional life is not a subject likely to be addressed by your doctor or by anyone else.

"There is something in the nature of things which the mind of man, which reason, which human power cannot effect, and certainly that which produces this must be better than man. What can this be but God?

Marcus Tullius Cicero

Yet, even the most naïve of us knows that living on an endangered planet creates a culture that affects every man, woman, and child. The most at risk, of course, are our children.

The pain of our children's despair invites us to remap our culture's values, to reexamine and transform the value of profit, of consumption, and to check out sustainability and wholeness.

So, to the forefront of our thinking must come doubt and faith and there we take a stand to be an adult about our culture, an adult who can take on the challenge of working with God to find a way out, an adult practicing responsible intelligence.

The willingness and courage to be aware of and experience the dark side of life, and the consequent despair we feel when we do so, is what distinguishes authentic faith from wishful thinking, from illusion, from denial.

Consider the words of William Blake from "On Another's Sorrow."

"Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another's grief
And not seek for kind relief?"

Empathy and Compassion And the Culture

Fortunately the kind of suffering that comes with The Overweight State offers a good antidote for dealing with the suffering within the human family. Through empathy with the suffering of others we loosen the bonds of pain constricting our own hearts. As you open your heart to the world, you grow in compassion.

Empathy is not coffee club mushiness. It is encoded in our brains, part of our natural equipment for dealing with the illusions of our culture and it is the emotion Jesus came to awaken through the Atonement, through Redemption.

Jesus said, "Love your neighbor," and "Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you." Thus, we can cultivate our inborn capacity to feel another person's pain and pleasure, happiness and sadness, love and fear, desire and despair – through the work of the Holy Spirit. We can consciously decide that we will no longer safely watch from the sidelines. We can intuitively know that when Jesus said, "I am the way," the way becomes a path toward Intentional Compassion, Healing, and Peace.

Intentional Compassion – Prayer with Meaning

Our personal lives are crowded with small times when, out of love, we perform what seem to be random acts of kindness, of compassion. Usually these acts are spontaneous, unplanned, single acts. But, when these separate acts are added up and examined, we see the face of God. When we perform the work of God with intention, with planning, and with purpose we are performing Intentional Compassion. We act as Jesus would have us to act not just in our busy out of control everyday lives, but through specific instances of focused prayer for others. When we stand face to face with God, we will discover that through obedience to the commands of Jesus to love one another, thousands can be blessed, because our intentions are contagious.

Practicing Intentional Compassion is deceptively simple:

**Speak From The Heart
And
Listen With Love**

Thus, we heal ourselves and others. The more we do it the better we get – the surer we are of healing when we do the practice well.

When you actually get it – that everybody carries the seeds of sorrow, fear, and despair within them, this reality reminds you of the exquisite fragility of life and your need to protect it.

And, this reality opens you to a meaning of who you can be as you practice empathy and Intentional Compassion. Through these gifts you expand your consciousness of suffering and release yourself, from the “I – Me – Mine” prison of feeding the ego, to an awareness that suffering is universal and that mindless eating is not the real solution to your worries.

You are no longer isolated by “my weight problem” but can move out into an enlarged, interconnected sense where you are truly In The Spirit.

Intentional Compassion is the gold in the accumulated sludge from the runoff of the sorrows of our culture.

It is the best medicine for you and through you for the human family.

The World And Its Suffering

The world as God originally designed it, was the best of all possible worlds, with order and beauty created by God for man. The first civilization was founded by Cain, a murderer, and as we listen to the daily news a lot of civilized life is a vast, complicated, more or less gilded-over system of murder, with strong men forcing innocent people away from their soil, making them refugees, making them live an artificial existence, away from the elemental order of peace and joy as established by God.

Thus, we have the awful problem of the suffering of innocent people, a problem that continually crops up in the Scriptures and in life and remains a mystery, except when viewed as the sin of strong men who out of pure hatred deprive the innocent of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

When we are sensitive to the sins of the strong against the weak we can measure our growth in grace. Grace will send us to our knees when we realize the awfulness of sin and the suffering it causes. This is the price of being sensitive to suffering.

Could it be that God uses the suffering that's in today's news as a means to bring us to the dust as we talk to Him in vicarious intercession through Intentional Compassion – knowing that God has the power to save the victims as He has saved us – if prayer has the power to awaken the mercy of God?

Prayers of Unquestionable Power

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.

Romans 8:26

Romans 8:26 infers that some situations are so despicable that we have no words to express the sorrow we feel and so the Holy Spirit – who has energized us for prayer – takes over and utters prayers for us from the heartaches we feel, heartaches caused by the waves of revulsion created by the media's images of evil acts in the newspapers and on TV.

Prayers can be contrasted as being either conscious – of the mind, or subconscious – of the heart. Conscious prayers are those in which we ask to be made spiritually real, when we sense that we are not. Subconscious prayers are those in which the need to draw closer to God through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, wells up within us.

When God searches our hearts, not to know what our conscious prayers are, but to find out what the prayer of the Holy Spirit is, the Spirit of God is using our minds and bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit, so, it's our responsibility to maintain the temple in as good a condition as we can in order that our prayers will be made as powerful as they can be.

If Prayer Is A Thought . . .

When we are Born Again we receive the Spirit of Jesus. But, to get the mind of Jesus takes brain work, a matter of the will. To be transformed by the renewing of our minds means that we are willing to lift all our concerns – individual, social, family, civic, world – all our problems, into the realm of the Spirit and there habitually work out a life of practical holiness, keeping the powers of our thinking going full pace. The more you do this, the more you can do it.

Remember, to be saved is a gift bought by the death of Jesus. But to be saved and never think about it is utmost ingratitude. We owe it to Jesus that we don't allow our brains to get rusty.

When our thinking is vigorous, our prayers are powerful, because prayers are thoughts lifted up to God.

You may be unaware of the fact that for more than 30 years in some of the world's most outstanding scientific institutions our thoughts have been studied to discover their true nature.

The evidence suggests that human thoughts – and thus prayers – are an actual physical “something” with the astonishing power to change our world.

So, every intention, every prayer we have uttered for us by the Holy Spirit as well as those consciously spoken or thought by us is a thing of energy, energy that influences other things.

So, we come to the word “Intentional” as a type of prayer resulting from our feelings of compassion for another human being. A textbook definition of Intentional characterizes it as “A purposeful plan to perform an action, which will lead to a desired outcome.”

The key words are “a purposeful plan.” Jesus says, “Ask.” To ask for something means that we want it, we desire it, we can see it, we can taste it, but we usually assume that God will deliver the plan and the inspiration to carry it out. Thus, we have no purposeful plan of how to achieve what we want. And, nothing happens until something moves, until action is taken. But, God helps those who help themselves.

So, Intentional Compassion begins with spirited prayer that is precisely targeted. Your intention pushes the boundaries as you focus on your own actions. This requires reasoning. This requires a commitment to do the intended deed.

God’s work is to answer your prayer through ridding your mind of self-limiting thoughts to which your potential acts are connected. Your work is to turn around those thoughts so that you can move forward on the desired outcome and then just do the work, trusting God for the outcome.

Thus, we live in a perfect world, just as it is.

Monday

Week 9 – Day 1

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our families

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Intention

What is your highest possible Intention with regard to the grief, fear, and despair of the culture we live in, factoring in the first six words of the Great Commission – “Go ye into all the world.”

Sit and meditate on this question. Listen to what your heart is telling you.

Then, take your writing pad and pen. Divide a page in half. At the top of one side of the page write – “What am I good at?” At the top of the other side write – “In the Spirit.”

Now, describe the attributes of your personality and of your skills under the “What am I good at?” side.

Under the “In the Spirit” heading list the attributes of your Spirit. (See 1st Corinthians 12:4-11)

Next, check with your church and with area churches for information regarding planned short-term missionary activities. Or, alternatively, spend some time volunteering at a local outreach such as your community homeless shelter, soup kitchen, or Habitat for Humanity.

Now, instead of watching too much TV or reading too many newspapers, spend a short time each day reciting the Twenty-Third Psalm. “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His names sake . . .”

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Tuesday

Week 9 – Day 2

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our work communities

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Music

Music has the real ability to enhance relaxation and increase your concentration through changing your brain and body chemistry. Researchers have not yet figured out how music raises your spirits or soothes your soul or causes a tapping of your toes or makes you want to jump and shout – but it does.

So, why not consider taking up a musical instrument or even better use your in house instrument – your own voice. This way you'll make new friends, improve your confidence, and push more blood throughout the cells of your body. Even if you're belting it out while behind the wheel on the freeway – you'll be expressing yourself and pushing more O₂ at the same time. And, there's no downside, except time for practice.

So, until you get your vocal chords up to speed, consider other people's music:

1. **To relax**
Lots of possibilities from Gregorian chants to lullabies to jazz
2. **To move quicker**
Rock, hip-hop, samba, steel-band, bagpipes, classical, the can-can
3. **To focus**
Mozart's "Sonata for two pianos in D major, K. 488"
4. **When reading or writing**
Mozart's "Divertimento" in B flat major
5. **To uplift or heal**
Hymns

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Wednesday

Week 9 – Day 3

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our living communities

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Contemplation While on Your Back

Meditative Prayer while sitting in a chair can cause you to slouch, aggravating back problems. Instead try this technique, called the rest position – a part of the Alexander Techniques for better posture.

- Step 1. You'll need a few books or a small firm pillow to put under your head – so get them ready.
- Step 2. Lie on the floor on your back with your knees bent and with your feet flat on the floor about the width of your hips. Your knees can be separated or touching. Either is OK – whichever is most comfortable.
- Step 3. Rest your head on the books or pillow, experimenting until you get your face level, looking up at the ceiling. If your head is thrown back – not enough books. Chin on chest – too many books.
- Step 4. Once you are in position, allow your back to fall naturally onto the floor without forcing. Fold your hands on your chest.
- Step 5. Relax. Release your tension. Breathe deeply slowly in and out.
- Step 6. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you relax your body while energizing your soul.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Thursday

Week 9 – Day 4

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our nation

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source For Identifying Your Clouds

In the Bible clouds are the symbol for the sorrows and suffering and circumstances arising out of a culture where the sovereignty of God seems to be contradicted.

Yet, it is through these very clouds that the Holy Spirit teaches us how to walk by faith. No clouds – no faith.

Consider. “Behold, He is coming with clouds . . .” (Revelation 1:7). Thus, God does not come in shiny brightness. And, when a cloud comes it’s not to teach us something, like with a lesson plan. It’s more like He wants us to unlearn something. He wants us to go through the grief, fear, and despair caused by our culture and, while in the cloud, we are to simplify our beliefs until our relationship with Him is exactly like that of a child.

So, how about you?

What does your interpretation of grief, fear, despair say about you?

There is a connection between the circumstances allowed by God and what we know of Him.

What about you?

Are you able to consider all the carnage in the world today and yet stay certain that God is great and God is good? Is anyone in your cloud except Jesus?

Wrapping Up

It’s time.

Friday

Week 9 – Day 5

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our world

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Tears

In Luke 6:21 Jesus says, "Happy are you who weep now because you will laugh." And in Luke 23:28 He says, "Do not weep for me but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Many adults can't cry, especially men. They feel ashamed or embarrassed or afraid to show their soft side.

They fear that if they start to cry they won't be able to stop, or they'll show weakness, a sign of being out of control.

But, shedding tears can release pent-up sadness that builds over time.

Sometimes nothing else will work but a torrent of tears.

Tears can wash away bad worry.

Crying eases the mind.

Sometimes what you really need to do and want to do is cry. The Bible says it's ok.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Saturday Eating Realities

Low Fat Eating

A simple way to improve your health is to pay attention to how much fat you are eating. Fat tends to clog up your arteries increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke. It also adds to the fat around your organs, leading to an ever enlarging waist line. You have been eating under 30 grams of fat a day which is a reasonable goal to strive for. Most Americans eat more than 60 grams of fat per day promoting the epidemic of obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Here are some simple tips you can use to start watching your fat intake. For a comprehensive list of the fat content of foods visit the USDA website and select Fat, sorted Alphabetically.

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Services/docs.htm?docid=9673>

The Ten Commandments of Low Fat Eating

- 1) **Eat no more than 30 grams of fat/day. (Nuts eaten as snacks are not counted)**
- 2) Know the fat content of everything you eat.
- 3) Limit Visible Fats
 - A) Do not use mayonnaise. If you have to use some, then use only Lite (low fat) Mayo.
 - B) Switch from regular butter or margarine to Non fat butter substitutes.
 - C) Switch from regular milk to skim milk.
- 4) No fried foods (French fries, fried chicken, regular potato chips).
- 5) Limit cheese.
- 6) Only fat free dressing.

- 7) Choose fat free or low fat products when possible. (ex. Non fat hotdogs, 96% lean ground beef, baked chips, etc)
- 8) Choose LEAN meats that are grilled, broiled, or baked. (Not fried)
- 9) Use PAM for cooking instead of oil, butter, or lard.
- 10) Use egg whites when cooking instead of whole eggs.

Most Fast Food Restaurants have a nutrition section on their websites where you can check the nutritional values of your favorite foods and decide what may be a healthier choice. Here are some examples of how many grams of fat are in some common foods.

Kentucky Fried Chicken – (www.kfc.com)

Crispy Strips - 24g

Pot Pie – 40g

Lower Fat Choices

Roasted Caesar Salad w/o dressing or croutons - 9g

Caesar Side Salad w/o dressing or croutons – 3g

Roasted BLT Salad w/o dressing – 7g

Tender Roast Filet Meal – 7g

Honey BBQ Sandwich - 6g

Tender Roast Sandwich w/o sauce - 5g

Chicken Breast w/o skin or breading – 3g

Green beans – 1.5g

Seasoned Rice – 1g

Mashed potatoes w/o gravy - 4g with gravy - 4.5g

Corn on Cob – 1.5g

Baked Beans – 1g

Taco Bell (www.tacobell.com)

Chicken Quesadilla - 30g

Nachos Supreme – 26g

Fiesta Taco Salad – 47g

Lower Fat Choices

When ordering the following ask for items “Fresco Style” for under 10 grams of fat.

Crunchy Taco – 7g
Soft Taco Beef – 8g
Ranchero Chicken Soft Taco – 4g
Grilled Steak Soft Taco – 5g
Gordita Baja Beef – 9g
Gordita Baja Chicken – 6g
Gordita Baja Steak – 7g
Bean Burrito – 8g
Burrito Supreme Chicken – 8g
Burrito Supreme Steak – 9g
Fiesta Burrito Chicken – 9g
Tostada – 6g
Enchirito Beef – 9g
Enchirito Chicken – 5g
Enchirito Steak – 6g

Burger King (www.bk.com)

Whopper - 42g
Large Fries - 35g

Lower Fat Choices

Chicken Whopper Sandwich w/o mayo – 7g
BK Veggie w/o mayo – 7g
Whopper Jr. w/o mayo – 13g
Hamburger – 13g
Chicken Tenders (4 pieces) – 9g / (5 pieces) – 12g
Side Garden Salad w/ fat free honey mustard dressing - .5g
Fire-Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad, fat free dressing w/o Garlic Parmesan Toast – 7g
Fire-Grilled Chicken Garden Salad, fat free dressing w/o Garlic Parmesan Toast – 7g
Fire-Grilled Shrimp Caesar Salad, fat free dressing w/o Garlic Parmesan Toast – 10g
Fire-Grilled Shrimp Garden Salad, fat free dressing w/o Garlic Parmesan Toast – 10g

Wendy's (www.wendys.com)

Classic Single w/o cheese – 19g

Biggie Fries – 24g

Lower Fat Choices

Plain Baked Potato – 0g

Small Chili – 6 g

Large Chili – 9g

Ultimate Chicken Grill Sandwich – 7g

Junior Hamburger – 9g

Side Salad with fat free dressing – 0g

Junior Frosty – 4g

These meals at Wendy's are 510 calories or less and contain 10 grams of fat or less when served with a diet soft drink or water.

-Grilled chicken sandwich with a side salad and fat free dressing

-Junior hamburger with a side salad and fat free dressing

-Large chili with a side salad and fat free dressing

-Plain baked potato and a small chili

McDonald's (www.mcdonalds.com/usa.html)

Big Mac – 30g

Large Fries – 25g

Lower Fat Choices

Hamburger – 9g

Cheeseburger – 12g

Premium Grilled Chicken Classic Sandwich – 9g

Premium Grilled Chicken Ranch BLT – 13g

4 Piece McNuggets – 10 g

Bacon Ranch Salad with Grilled Chicken, fat free dressing – 9g

Bacon Ranch Salad w/o chicken, fat free dressing – 7g

Caesar Salad w/ Grilled Chicken, fat free dressing – 6g

Caesar Salad w/o chicken, fat free dressing – 4g

California Cobb Salad w/ Grilled Chicken, fat free dressing – 11g

California Cobb Salad w/o chicken, fat free dressing – 9g

Side Salad, fat free dressing – 0g

Fruit'n Yogurt Parfait – 2g

Apple Dippers w Low Fat Caramel Dip – 1g

Pizza Hut (www.pizzahut.com)

Choose Thin 'N Crispy or Hand-Tossed Crusts

Fat per One Slice of 12" Medium Pizza

Pepperoni -10g

Cheese – 8 g

Chicken Supreme – 7g

Quartered Ham – 6g

Veggie Lover's – 7g

Subway

Ham, Ham and Turkey, or Club - 6 inch on wheat; no mayonnaise, cheese, or oil
5-6g

Check menu for other 5-6 gram options (there are usually many choices).

Chick-Fil-A

Regular Chicken Sandwich – 16g

8-pack Nuggets – 12g

4-pack Chicken strips – 13g

Chicken Salad Sandwich – 15g

Chargrilled Chicken Sandwich (no sauce) – **3.5gm**

Add sauce – 9.5g

Chargrilled Chicken Garden Salad (Fat free dressing) – 6g

Brownie – 15g

Cheesecake (1slice) – 21g

Saturday's Message

Week 9

"Do We Really Care?"

Luke 10:38-42

The title of this message is the title of a well-known song which asks the challenging question: "Do we really care?" I want to expand that basic question to ask: "Do we really care about the things in life that really matter? Do we really care about the values in life that really count – count for now and for eternity?"

Luke 10:38-42 tells about an interesting event in the life of Jesus. Jesus entered a certain village and was received as a special guest in the home of Martha and her sister Mary. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to His great teaching while Martha worried about serving the guests at the table. Martha came to Jesus and asked Him to get Mary to help her with the chores. And Jesus said to her: "Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many LITTLE things. But ONE thing is needful: and Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her."

Too often we are like Martha – giving our attention to the LITTLE things instead of paying attention to the BIG things. Many times we are guilty of majoring on minors. We get our values all mixed up. We care about the little things too much and do not care enough about values that really matter.

All of this gives rise to another important question: "What are some of the values that really count – really matter?"

1. Life matters. Life is a gift from God. God created us – made us in His own image. Genesis 2:7 says: "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." Life itself is a value that counts – and we should be concerned about life – the quality of life of every person God has made. We need to give attention to what I think of as the wholeness of life – physical, mental, spiritual, social. All these qualities are intertwined and related and contribute to the wholeness of life.
2. Our personal relationship with Almighty God who made us is a value that counts – for now and for eternity. John chapter 3, tells us about a Pharisee named Nicodemus showed great concern about this abiding value and Jesus told him that he "must be born again" – spiritual birth – in order to be in right relationship with God. Romans 3:23 declares "all have sinned, and

come short of the glory of God." But Romans 6:23 proclaims that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thank God for the Good News message found in John 3:16 which says: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Where are we right now in our personal relationship with Almighty God who created us?

3. Personal spiritual growth is a value that counts.

Dr. David Dyer, one of my religion professors at Wake Forest University, told us: "Spiritually speaking many people are born again but never get out of the delivery room." What he meant was that some people experience the new birth in Christ but do not grow as God intends toward Christ-likeness. Are we maturing in the faith through Bible study, worship, and service? Are we becoming more like Christ every day that we live? Are we growing up spiritually? To be sure, spiritual growth is a value that counts.

4. Divine judgment counts. It counts for eternity. In His teachings concerning judgment, Jesus Christ is very forceful and descriptive, especially in Matthew 25 verse 31 and following where He says:

When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:' . . . Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

The hymn writer knew that divine judgment counts and was motivated to write:

Where will you spend eternity?
This question comes to you and me!
Tell me, what shall your answer be!
Where will you spend eternity?

And so, we return to the original question asked by the title of this message and we make it very personal. Do we really care? Do we really care about the values in life that really matter? Remember the command of Jesus Christ who said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Reverend Phillip R. Morrow Sr.

