

Rescue Mission

"My neighbor, who volunteers for Alpine Rescue, has told me hair-raising stories of tourists who must be rescued from certain death after wandering off a trail, falling, or simply being exposed to a sudden hailstorm or thirty-degree drop in temperature. Nevertheless, regardless of the circumstances, Alpine Rescue always responds to a call for help. Not once have they lectured a hapless tourist, 'Well, since you obviously ignored the most basic rules of the wilderness, you'll just have to sit here and bear the consequences. We won't assist you.' Their mission is rescue, and so they pursue every needy hiker in the wilderness, no matter how undeserving..."

I have come to see the central message of the Bible, too, as one of rescue...none of us deserve God's mercy and none can save ourselves. Like a stranded hiker, all we can do is cry for help." Philip Yancey

Monday – An Attitude of Love

"If you asked twenty good men today what they thought are the highest of virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you asked almost any of the great Christians of old he would have replied, Love ." C.S. Lewis

1. Read Philippians 2:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 5:14. In his letter to the Philippians, what blessings does Paul appeal to in order to call the believers to unity?
2. How has Christ's love working through his Church encouraged you this year? In what ways does Christ's love compel you to love others?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7. We often serve God with a mix of motives. Why should love, as described here by Paul, be the primary reason for ministering to the Church and the world at large?

Prayer Focus – Ask God to open your eyes to see the greatness of his love for you. Then ask him to purify your heart towards others.

Tuesday – Others-centered Thinking

"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality... I believe that what self-centered men have torn down, other-centered men can build up." Martin Luther King, Jr. – Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech (1964)

1. Read Philippians 2:3-5. In your own words, what is Paul saying in these verses? What do you think Paul meant when he calls believers to consider "others better than yourselves?"
2. Describe a time when someone thought of your needs above their own. How did this impact your life?
3. Why is other-centered thinking better than self-centered thinking in building up God's Kingdom and creating a loving community? How should this attitude, "Christ's attitude," impact the way we do missions?

Prayer Focus – Do you know our FBC missionaries? Choose one, and pray for them, asking God to fill them with the attitude we have learned about today.

Wednesday – Rescuing the Troubled and the Lost

"Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage." C.S. Lewis

1. Read Luke 15:4-10. What is the motivation behind the shepherd looking for the lost sheep and the women looking for the lost coin? What do these parables reveal about God's love for the lost and his joy at their returning?
2. Read Philippians 2:6-8 and Colossians 1:13. Why was it necessary for the heavenly Christ to come to earth in human form in order to rescue us? In what ways does Christ call us to enter the "dominion of darkness" as he did?

Text Insight – The word "rescue" means "to deliver from a tyrannical or oppressive power." In the Old Testament, deliverance is often associated with the Exodus (Exod. 6:6, 14:30; Judg. 6:9). In the New Testament, it is associated with deliverance from the evil one (Mt. 6:13) and the coming wrath (1 Thess. 1:10).

Prayer Focus – Do you know of a country or people group that is lost apart from Christ? Pray for them, that God would open their hearts to the gospel. If you don't know of a people group or nation that is without the gospel, pray for the Pukapaki people of Papua New Guinea.

Thursday – Humbling Ourselves to Help Others

"Normally we look upwards, to someone above us, when we are impressed by his glory. But in the case of Jesus we have to look downwards. We discover his glory in his humbleness, his greatness in his poverty, his power in his self-surrender..."

Jürgen Moltmann – The Power of the Powerless

1. Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 and Philippians 2:6-8. In what ways does Jesus empty himself and become poor? Why does he choose to do this?
2. What do you think he humbled himself means in Phil. 2:8? How does Jesus' act of obedience affect the whole human race and even the cosmos (Rom. 8:20-21)? How would you contrast this with Adam's disobedience?

Prayer Focus – Pray for the people group or nation that you prayed for yesterday. This time, ask the Lord to raise up people who will go and represent Christ by bringing them the gospel.

Friday – Willingness to Suffer

"Recognizing the necessity for suffering I tried to make of it a virtue...I have lived these last few years with the conviction that unearned suffering is redemptive ." Martin Luther King, Jr. – Suffering and Faith

1. Read Philippians 2:8. How does Jesus' suffering bring about our salvation?
2. Read Hebrews 13:12-16. Christians are often called to suffer for Christ (Phil. 1:29). How does God use suffering and sacrifice to redeem non-believers to Christianity? Why are these virtues essential to missions?

Prayer Focus – Continue to pray for the people group you have been praying for on Wednesday and Thursday.

Weekend – Exaltation by God's Means

"The exaltation of Jesus is not that he has been promoted from humility to greatness, not that he has become something quite different from what he was on earth, but rather that his self-forgetful love has been declared by God to be the only true greatness, to be indeed the very character of God himself. And this is why his example provides the rule for the common life of the church."

G.B. Caird – Paul's Letters from Prison

1. Read Mark 10:35-45 and Philippians 2:9-11. How is God's view of greatness different from that of the world's?
2. Why is serving and loving our neighbor more important in God's eyes than our personal achievement and worldly happiness?