



SEPTEMBER 2020

ISSUE 20-9

# The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

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# Leadership

## SERMON SERIES: FALL 2020 MATTHEW 18: RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NEW COMMUNITY

### From Pastor Chad

*We will be finishing up the sermon series on Ephesians 6:10-20, The Armor of God, the first two Sundays in September and will begin a new series on Matthew 18 later in the month. Below is a brief introduction to that new series, which is coming soon.*

In the fall of 2017, we looked at Christ's Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7. In 201, we studied Christ's words to his disciples as he sent them out to be laborers in the harvest (Matthew 10). Last fall, we considered the collection of Jesus' parables on the nature of the kingdom of God in Matthew 13, the third of his five discourses in Matthew. This year, we are considering Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18 on the nature of relationships within the new community of his followers, the Church.



There is much we can learn from Christ's teaching in Matthew 18 about who we are in Christ and how we are to treat one another within the Church. Jesus calls us to embrace humility, both before God and towards others, by becoming like children, or as Christ puts it, "little ones." We are to live out that humility by receiving other little ones (believers) in his name. We should not cause them to stumble, nor should we despise them. Rather, we are to arrive for their wellbeing, especially their spiritual flourishing, knowing that they, like us,

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus told his disciples to go and make more disciples from people of all nations. As a key part of their disciple-making, they were to teach these new disciples to observe all that he had commanded them. This is fitting because Jesus is the great prophet of whom Moses spoke - the one to whom the people of God must listen (Deuteronomy 18:15). The Gospel, according to Matthew, is full of the teachings of Jesus. It includes five great discourses from Christ's ministry - the Sermon on the Mount (5-7), the Evangelism Charge to His Apostles (10), the Parables on the Kingdom of God (13), the Discourse on Relationships in the New Community (i.e., the Church) (18), and the Teaching on the Judgment of Israel and the Nations (23-25).

belong to the Father. When they sin against us, we are called to lovingly confront them for their spiritual blessing and for the good of the Church as a whole. Finally, we are implored to forgive them as we have been forgiven.

These themes are timeless and will certainly help us to grow as a people in Christ as we seek to observe all that he has commanded. I look forward to exploring this portion of God's Word together with you. ■

### RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH

Sept. 20	Matthew 18:1-6	Becoming Little Ones
Sept. 27	Matthew 18:5-9	Lead Others Not into Temptation
Oct. 4	Matthew 18:10-14	Children of the Heavenly Father
Oct. 11	Matthew 18:15-20	Binding and Loosing
Oct. 18	Matthew 18:21-35	The Forgiving Nature of the Forgiveness

# SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

## August 2020 Session Highlights

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are some highlights from the August 25 meeting.

- The Session considered Proverbs 11:14, “Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety,” for its devotional before the meeting. The theme was the blessing of wisdom that comes in a plurality of leadership.
- Stewardship and Finance reported that as of the end of July 2020 tithes and offerings toward the church’s 2020 general budget are at \$521,509, which is 55% of the 2020 budget. This is above the average of 51% (2015-2019) our church has historically received by the end of June. Our expenses were \$528,749, 55% of the budget, for a net loss of \$7,240 year to date. Though we are now slightly behind for the year, we are in a strong financial position for this time of the year. Praise was given to God in prayer for his financial blessing.
- The Session did not make any changes to our current guidelines and procedures for worship and other ministries. We continue under the phase 1 guidelines established in June (see our website for details).
- The Session approved the Discipleship Committee’s plan to begin Ekklesia (Wednesday Bible Study) via Zoom on September 9, with a goal of resuming Ekklesia in person on September 30. The details of in person Ekklesia will be more fully communicated in the weeks to come. The children’s and youth ministries will also look to September 30 as a target date for resuming in person gatherings with necessary safety measures. Again, more will be communicated with families as we near September 30.
- The Missions Committee reported the cancellation of the Missions Sunday, previously scheduled for October 25, 2020. The committee also shared the good news that Ilyssa H. has been approved by the Board of World Witness as a candidate to serve in the Bridge Europe field. Ilyssa will begin fundraising soon.
- The chairmen of the committees of the Session gave reports of the work and ministry they are overseeing (see the ministry sections of the Diligent for more on these ministries). Prayer was offered after each report, asking for the Lord’s guidance and blessing.
- A season of prayer was had for various needs within our congregation, community, and world.

## PRAYER FOCUS

**SEPTEMBER 6** - Labor Day: A Focus on the Good of Our Work and Vocations

**SEPTEMBER 13** - Choices Pregnancy Center

**SEPTEMBER 20** - World Witness

**SEPTEMBER 27** - First Responders/Emergency Service Providers

# Discipleship

## WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

From Pastor Mackay

At the start of another season of discipleship ministry, let's take a moment and remind ourselves what we mean when we talk about "discipleship." Along with worship, evangelism, and servanthood, it's one of our core objectives at FPC. But what do we mean?

Being a "disciple" means, most fundamentally, a follower. Thus, discipleship is, as a core definition, following Jesus Christ. That said, we need God's Word to give us the broad scope of what that means. We need to understand the particulars of following Jesus. What specifically does this following involve? Am I following Jesus by claiming to follow him? Am I following him by having no objection to other people following him? Am I following him by putting butter on my toast in the morning? We also need to know the breadth of following Jesus. To return to our breakfast table, can I follow Jesus by eating? How much of my life is understood as an effort of discipleship?

Let's start at the very beginning. As we saw last year in our study of Steven Smallman's *The Walk*, the journey of the disciple begins with a call and response. In this case, just as Jesus calls his disciples in Mark 2, we hear a calling to follow. This calling is heard in two aspects. One aspect is the calling to believe that Jesus is who he claims to be; it is a belief in Jesus' identity. He is the Son of God, by which we mean he is God himself, the second person of the Trinity made flesh (see John 8). Next, we are called to believe in his work. He is the Savior, meaning that he has carried out God's plan of salvation by living a perfect life, dying on the cross for the sins of God's people, rising from the dead, and ascending into Heaven (see 1 Cor. 15). Here we also see that part and parcel of believing in Jesus' saving work is to believe that we need to be saved. It means believing that we are sinners without hope except by God's grace (Eph 2:18-19, Rom 3:23).

Putting it all together, disciples in Jesus are those who profess faith in him (Rom. 10, Rom 1:16-17, Hab. 2:4). This is the *sin qua non* (the necessary requirement) of discipleship, trusting in Jesus as Lord.

Saving faith is the necessary starting point, and true faith, according to the Bible, bears fruit. We can think of this fruit in many ways (the image of fruit is a metaphor). I want to point out two. One way to think about the next step of discipleship is pursuing knowledge of God. I'm going to reference J.I. Packer's *Knowing God* "ad nauseum" in our first Ekklesia adult Bible study series. This is the thesis of his work: Christians need to pursue an ever-greater knowledge of God. This knowledge comes as we read his Word, pray, and worship him together. Here we begin to uncover the particulars of following Jesus. We also see that we are to do them together (Col 3:16-17).

So, discipleship here is the gathering of those who believe in Jesus, who have the gift of salvation, pursuing a deeper knowledge of him. Christians are those who have been enraptured by a divine, saving love, and we desire to know as much as we can about our great lover. We have been conquered by grace, and we desire to know our Savior. We want to pursue Jesus.

The other equally important way we understand the fruit of faith is the fruit of obedience. We want to grow in our love for Jesus, but we also want to live our lives as he instructs. Holiness is the pathway to blessedness and happiness (Psalm 1). God is holy, and he requires his people to be holy. Here we better understand the breadth of following Jesus. Part of our ongoing discipleship is learning more and more to see everything in life in terms of God's commands. Yes, we can eat breakfast as a way of following Jesus (see Col 3:17)! Growing in Christ is going from seeing some things as "Christian" (church, prayer, etc.) to seeing all of life as a call to obedience.

Discipleship is the people of Jesus following Jesus. It is knowing him better and, as we know him better, obeying his gracious commands. What is the end of discipleship? It is nothing short of glory. We are people whose deepest need is to know and worship our God. Like a fish is made for swimming, worship is our deepest need and expressed purpose. Discipleship brings the joys (and, yes, the trials) of worshipping in this life, and the sure hope of worshipping without hindrance for all eternity. Won't you join us on this journey? ■

## EKKLESIA

Our fall Bible Study is *The Attributes of God*. God delights to make himself known. We will turn to the Scriptures to study what he has said! We will focus on the classic attributes God claims for himself - holiness, infinity, omnipotence, love, etc. - and apply their massive importance to our daily lives.

The Session has approved a plan to begin Ekklesia in two stages:

### Wednesday, September 9:

We will begin our Adult Bible Study virtually via Zoom at 7 pm. Meeting info and a Zoom link will be published through church communications (or you can contact Mackay for assistance). Audio recordings from the lesson will be available on CD and on the discipleship podcast.

### Wednesday, September 30:

Fellowship suppers are tentatively set to resume at 6 pm, followed by the Adult Bible Study at 7 pm. The Zoom meeting and audio options will continue to be available to view from home. Several changes will be in place for our fellowship suppers including:

- Limited seating, which **must** be reserved beforehand to ensure social distancing.
- Reservations **must** be made online or by calling the church office by Wednesday at 10 am.
- Meals will be served individually packaged rather than served cafeteria-style.
- Masks are encouraged when not eating.

## SMALL GROUP LEADERS

This month, we will begin a bi-monthly Zoom meeting to encourage each other, pray for one another, and work to grow in our service to the church. Our first meeting is Sunday, September 13 at 5pm. Check your email for the Zoom link, or you can get the meeting information from Mackay or the church office. Make sure you check out *Nourished and Knit Together* on our church website (see below).

## DISCIPLESHIP PODCASTS

Click on “Ekklesia Online and Discipleship Resources” under the FPC Ministries tab on our church website for a link to listen to our two series:

*Bring the Books!*, which considers a section of a classic work of Christian literature and apply its Biblical insights to our lives, posts weekly on Wednesday mornings.

*Nourished and Knit Together*, a podcast specifically for Small Group leaders (but open to anyone!), posts monthly.

## SMALL GROUPS

Now is a great time to devote yourself to the teaching, fellowship, outreach, and service of a small group. We currently have groups meeting on campus and virtually through video-conferencing. Please speak with Mackay if you would like guidance to explore this discipleship ministry.

## DISCIPLESHIP '20-'21 The Only True God

And this is eternal life,  
that they know you,  
the only true God, and  
Jesus Christ whom  
you have sent.

-John 17: 3

## LAMENT

From Vince Treadway

Lament: “to mourn aloud; wail, to express sorrow, mourning, a crying out in grief, wailing, dirge, elegy, complaint” (*Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th Edition, Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2003). These are a few of the definitions for the word “lament” found in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary on my shelf. We have many examples of lament in Scripture, particularly in the Psalms: 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 36, 39, 40, and 44, to mention a few! I find it comforting to see lament expressed in Scripture. There we are given permission to express our deepest feelings of anguish, hurt, disappointment, anger, and sorrow because we find it so poignantly expressed. I find it even more powerful when Scriptures of lament are coupled with an appropriate musical setting. The *Trinity Hymnal* has most of the Psalms represented, and many of them are Psalms of lament.

Before I share a few that I think are particularly important to know and sing, I want to share why I

felt this topic was appropriate for *The Diligent*. I would imagine that everyone on the planet has felt his or her world turned topsy-turvy to some degree with the COVID-19 pandemic. Schedules have been interrupted, jobs lost, isolation and depression are growing, and what was “normal” now seems like a dream. It is right, proper, and even healthy to express these feelings in a godly way! Using Scripture as a model is a wonderful way to find the words of lament that are appropriate, yet still ultimately trusting in our all-powerful, all-knowing God.

Here are ten hymns that are settings of lament Psalms that you may find helpful in this difficult time of challenge:

O Lord, Most High, with All My Heart (hymn 48)

O Lord, Be Thou My Helper True (hymn 50)

God, Be Merciful to Me (hymn 486)

O God, No Longer Hold Thy Peace (hymn 61)

Thy Mercy and Thy Truth, O Lord (hymn 60)

My Song Forever Shall Record (hymn 99)

Bow Down Thine Ear, O Lord, and Hear (hymn 91)

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past (hymn 30)

What Time I Am Afraid (hymn 665)

Lord, Thou Hast Searched Me (hymn 36)

There are many more hymns that would express lament, and I invite you to turn to pages 900-901 in the *Trinity Hymnal* to find the Psalms and hymns of lament. If you do not own a *Trinity Hymnal*, you can order one online from Great Commissions Publications. When you find yourself beginning to feel sorrow and despondence about the situation in our culture today, remember that our Sovereign, Holy, Just God is still in control and his will WILL be done! Turn to Scripture and sing it as an expression of sorrow but also in complete trust in God. He will not ever fail you. ■



# High School & Middle School

## 1 JOHN AND YOUTH

**From Shane Miller**

*I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*  
1 John 2:12-14

In my recent studies in the first epistle of John, I came across a Greek word that stood out to me in a significant way: νεανίσκοι. (For those of you who are curious, this word is pronounced 'nee-ah-nisk-oi'.) In the NIV, this word is translated as 'young men,' but this word can also be translated as 'youth.' "I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one" (2:13). "I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (2:14).

Let that sink in for some time. John, writing to a church in the first century (perhaps in Ephesus), saw fit not to simply address the fathers, but the youth and the children as well. It can sometimes be the case that we see youth and children almost as a separate branch of the church. Much attention can be given to the adults and their own spiritual formation under the gospel of Christ. To be sure, the discipleship of the adults was vital in the view of the apostle, as we see him addressing the 'fathers.' But John balances our vision of church ministry and discipleship by his address to children and youth.

John doesn't just stop with a simple address, though. He goes further by acknowledging the work that God is doing in and through the young people in this first-century church. "I am

writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one." I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one." Far from considering the young people of this congregation as incapable of any type of spiritual growth or understanding, the apostle John commends the grace of God at work in these youth.

The author's loving words to these youth and children in the first century ought to challenge us in the twenty-first. These young people at First Pres that we see on a Sunday morning are not merely "along for the ride." They are brothers and sisters, people who are integral to the local body of Christ. Perhaps they do not have the faith of their fathers (yet), but they are growing in magnificent ways in the gospel and grace of Christ as they are shaped by his Word and by the Holy Spirit at work in his body. Do we acknowledge our young ones like John did? Do we rejoice in how the gospel is forming and shaping them in ways similar to the apostle? As we are gearing up for a new school year of youth ministry, let us pray that our hearts would conform to the Scriptures in these ways. ■

## WEDNESDAY YOUTH PODCAST

Every Wednesday, Shane distributes a podcast for the students called the *Quarantine-Cast!* where he gives updates on the youth ministry while also teaching on the book of 2nd John. If you want to listen, click on the link for the podcast on the Youth Ministry page on our church website, search Apple Podcasts or Google for *First Pres Lake Wales Youth Ministry Podcast*.



# Children's Ministry

## A PASSAGE TO PACK...OR POST

From Kelly Harrington

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

September, even in regular times, can be a challenging month for families! As a teacher, I loved the first day of school but not the second or very many of them until mid to late October. Once the first day was over, the excitement of the new school year seemed to drain right out of the classroom, and the work of molding another group of kids into a cohesive community of curious learners was like molding soaking wet clay into a beautiful sculpture. It felt like I was starting over every day, and it took time! Starting a new school year, picking up a busy schedule once again, and pressing into a new stride is challenging for kids, parents, and teachers.

This year, which is far from ordinary, has several extra layers of challenge to it with the still-present threat of

COVID-19, social restrictions, shifting schedules, and scramble for readiness.

According to many sources, planning for this school year and other usual activities that start up with it has been an exhausting and frustrating task. It seems there are very few people who are exempt from the touch of the school year schedule; even the church has been affected. We have adjusted many of our plans for resuming Sunday school, Ekklesia Kidz, and other activities against the school schedule's shift, and we are continuing to watch COVID-19 numbers as students gather in schools. None of which can be helped or changed, and no one is to blame.

Rather than complain or despair in our difficulties, we must continue to pursue the will of God.

Although there are many things I would like to do

right now and cannot, his purpose is made clear in his Word! "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). God's Word always brings us back to the purpose of worshipping him and giving thanks for all that he is! More than anything, God desires our hearts to be attuned to him through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in our lives. He never desires work before worship; our work is a product of faithful obedience to him! What a great set of verses to encourage us and our kids in this season of picking up our work for the new school year!



Every year, I choose a scripture for our family to carry in our backpacks to school and work throughout the year. The night before the first day of school, we gather our new bags loaded with new school supplies and place them in a pile in the living room. Monty leads us in prayers and blessings for the new school year, and then I present the verse I have chosen for each of us to pack in our bags.. Throughout the year, the verse stays in our bags to remind us of our mission at school and work. It usually doesn't take long for it to get mixed up with school papers and crumpled along the way, but it is always put back in place when the clutter is occasionally cleaned out. At least, that is how it went for many years.

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With almost grown kids and only one at home attending school online, we no longer have the pile of backpacks to load with school supplies and pack our verses into. However, we have our verses. This year they are posted rather than packed. So, next to the computer for online school there is a reminder of our most important daily work: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Regardless of the changes all around, the starts and stops of school, the cancellations of activities, and the uncertainties of the days ahead, we know God's will! It has been made perfectly clear in his Word! I encourage you, Christian family, to find a passage that you can pack (or post) to remind you and your family of your purpose in Christ Jesus throughout this school year and these ever-changing times. ■

## EKKLESIA KIDZ

We have a tentative plan to begin Ekklesia Kidz on Wednesday, September 30 at 6:30 p.m., following the Ekklesia Fellowship Meal. Children and volunteers should plan to wear face masks and social distancing rules will be in place during our meeting time. Parents will sign in their children in the Missions Lobby after dinner and we will meet in the Children's Department for our program; students should be picked up in the Children's Department at 7:30 p.m.



## MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

### BIRTHDAYS

September 1, Elaine Rawlings  
September 2, Susan Stiles  
September 2, David Caldwell  
September 3, Maggie Hunt  
September 5, Patty McKeeman  
September 7, Rachel Miller  
September 8, Emma Harrington  
September 8, Ger Lippert  
September 8, Kay Klinefelter  
September 9, Golda Carson  
September 9, Kathleen Violette  
September 10, Donald Krpata  
September 10, Jaden Youmans  
September 11, Babe Warren  
September 11, Jan Lewis  
September 13, Maija Baynes  
September 13, Debbie Pace  
September 14, Cecilia Smith  
September 14, Tim Abele  
September 14, Karla Campbell  
September 16, Laura Lynn Berkau  
September 16, Dionne Kohl  
September 18, Samuel Rode  
September 18, Asher Michalkiewicz  
September 18, Suzie Hershberger  
September 20, Jill Smith  
September 21, Kerry Klinefelter  
September 22, Ed Lamb  
September 24, Colton Bass  
September 25, Alice Campbell  
September 25, Hailey Hunt  
September 25, Ron Campbell  
September 25, Ella Harrington  
September 27, Todd Sebring  
September 27, Lorin Bice  
September 27, Vicki Flint  
September 28, Von Wilson  
September 29, Isaac Miller  
September 30, Donna Carter

### ANNIVERSARIES

September 1, Dale & Carol Bourdette  
September 6, Steve & Georgianna Sorensen  
September 12, Edward & Kathy Enz  
September 13, Roger & Alice Campbell  
September 18, David & Cindy Caldwell  
September 20, Loren & Nancy Furland  
September 22, Jimmy & Jan Kahler  
September 23, Charlie & Cindy Henry  
September 23, Tom & Trish Kohl



## CHOICES BABY BOTTLE CAMPAIGN

FPC is glad to support the Choices Baby Bottle Campaign again this year! Choices is a pregnancy care program of the Lake Wales Care Center which provides information and medical resources for women who are confronted with an unexpected pregnancy and need help making lifesaving, important decisions for their babies. The staff and volunteers at Choices are trained to provide informational consultations about parenting and adoption, pregnancy tests, and ultrasound screenings; all services are free to clients. The annual Baby Bottle Campaign raises money to help Choices continue to provide these important community services and will run this year from September 13 to October 25; bottles will be available to pick up at church on Sunday, September 13 and in the church office.



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## CHURCH OFFICERS

### ELDERS

#### 2020

John Dubois  
 Stewart Hurst  
 Ed Lamb  
 Fox Rawlings

#### 2021

Mike Berkau  
 Paul Benner

#### 2022

Frank Hunt III  
 John Matteson  
 Vince Treadway

#### 2023

Scott Crews  
 Doug Pace

### DEACONS

#### 2020

David Bass  
 Lynne Hulen  
 Rob McCollum  
 David Kennedy Nelson

#### 2021

David Caldwell  
 Michael Kahler  
 Carl McCollum  
 Tony Thomas

#### 2022

Bea Meeker  
 Aaron Nelson  
 Mary Youmans

**Moderator:** Rev. Chad Reynolds  
**Vice Moderator:** Rev. Mackay Smith  
**Clerk of Session:** Ed Lamb  
**Chairman of Deacons:** Rob McCollum  
**Deacon Secretary:** David Kennedy Nelson  
**Chm. of the Congregation:** Jake Cockrell  
**Treasurer:** Michelle Hurst (2020-2021)  
**Asst. Treasurer:** Daniel Hunt (2020-2021)