

THE SCROLL

“Make disciples of all nations...”

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Change is hard. It is really hard. There is a reason most people do well with routine. It is comfortable. We tend to do the same thing every morning of our lives. We have our regular evening rituals. We tend to eat the same types of foods over and over again. Year after year we aim to make some changes in our lifestyle, and yet by the end of the year, for most of us, things are exactly the same as the year before.

Yet, for the believer, change must be the norm, not exception. The process of being a disciple means that we are constantly striving to be more like Jesus. It is our daily aim to sound more like Christ, think more like Christ, and act more like Christ. Our devotion to our Savior means we must be committed to change.

Change is even harder when it affects more than just you. When change hits a crowd of people, there is always a wave of reactions. Some people have been craving change. Some people hate change. Some people are nervous about change but are willing to give it a try. It makes proposing change extremely nerve-racking.

Yet, change must happen.

Here are some areas I believe change is necessary in our church.

First, the most important thing that needs to change is that we become very intentional about one-on-one discipleship with one another. We need to form deep relationships within the church that drive one another to love the Scriptures and to live its principles out in our lives. Many of us know one another's names, but do not know the pains and celebrations of many who are around us. We need to be ready to adjust our schedules to allow meeting with someone from the church 2-4 hours a month. We NEED this change.

Second, we are not growing leaders the way we need to grow leaders. Many of us (I'm the chief offender here) are far more comfortable just doing something on our own rather than asking others to work with us (which takes more time and energy). The result is we become experts and then no one is left to take our place. We need to change how we do things to bring along others to fill our shoes. We need to grow leaders across the board.

Third, we need to make it easier for new people who visit our church to get involved in meaningful service. This will require us to understand why we do what we do and to have open chairs for people to fill within our ministries. Part of our planning needs to think through what pieces someone new might be able to step in and handle. We need room for growth.

Change is hard. Change is necessary. Let's get ready.

God is good.

Steve

Why My Shepherd Carries a Rod

APRIL 21, 2024 | DAVID GIBSON

If you see a woman in green or blue scrubs with a stethoscope around her neck, you know who she is and what she does.

If a man comes into your house to fix something and he's got a hammer, a saw, a chisel, and a measuring tape on his tool belt hanging around his waist, then you know he's not there to repair your laptop. Who he is and what he does are evident from what he holds.

Psalm 23 teaches us who the Lord Jesus is and what he does by what he holds. He's heavily armed. This is the further beautiful amplification of why we need not fear the darkest of valleys: "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (v. 4).

Rugged Shepherd

In the 19th century, J. L. Porter met shepherds in the northern Transjordan region, the same part of the world that led King David to write Psalm 23. The times have changed, of course, but the ruggedness required to shepherd in that place has remained the same. Here's Porter's description:

The shepherds themselves had none of that peaceful and placid aspect which is generally associated with pastoral life and habits. They looked like warriors marching to the battlefield—a long gun slung from the shoulder, a dagger and heavy pistols in the belt, a light battle-axe or iron-headed club in the hand. Such were the equipments; and their fierce flashing eyes and scowling countenances showed but too plainly that they were prepared to use their weapons at any moment.

We're so used to the gentleness of Psalm 23 that we may never have felt the steel encased in the velvet. Dale Ralph Davis says,

Jesus Christ, our Shepherd, is no emaciated weakling. Our Shepherd is a warrior, as shepherds had to be. No one can snatch his sheep out of his hand (John 10:28). The muscles of his arm are flexed to defend his flock; he doesn't carry a club for nothing. He is obviously enough for whatever the valley throws at us.

Spurgeon says the shepherd's rod and staff lead David to praise him for "the ensigns of [his] sovereignty and of [his] gracious care." Richard Briggs suggests that "the rod and the staff are the visible symbols of God's invisible presence, in turn suggestive of the shepherd in the valley as the visible symbol of God's presence."

Rod as Weapon

Let's consider the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus displayed in his rod and see how it comforts his sheep.

Kenneth Bailey notes the word translated "rod" has a semantic range that can include "rod," "scepter," and "weapon," and so a "rod" isn't the same thing as a walking stick:

Rather, it is the shepherd's primary offensive weapon for protecting the flock from enemies, be they wild animals or human thieves. The instrument itself is about two and a half feet long with a mace-like end into which the heavy pieces of iron are often embedded. It becomes a formidable weapon.

This is why texts like Psalm 2:9 speak of the Lord's anointed one smiting the nations with "a rod of iron" (see also Rev. 2:27; 12:5). The reference is likely to a wooden item but with iron embedded into it to ensure maximum effectiveness in the hand of the one who wields it.

David's own account of his shepherding must surely be referring to an item like a rod as he presents himself to Saul as a combatant able to face mighty Goliath: "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there

came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him” (1 Sam. 17:34–35).

Rod as Safety Device

At the same time, Bailey makes a good case that the shepherd’s rod wasn’t only used for fighting. He draws attention to Leviticus 27:32, where (despite the ESV’s rendering of the word as “staff”) the shepherd’s rod is in view as a counting device for his flock. The idea is that as the sheep reenter the fold at each day’s end, the rod is held up across the entrance and the sheep are counted in as they pass beneath it. (Today we’d use a digital sign-up form or a scannable QR code for check-in to the premises.)

This is the shepherd’s way of personally checking his sheep are all present and accounted for. Bailey writes, “Thus the sheep (in the flock of God) can note the shepherd’s rod and remember that it is an ‘alarm system’ used to assure everyone’s safety. If any sheep is lost, the shepherd will be alerted during the ‘evening count.’”

This is a beautiful picture, for the implement of warfare is now turned to a different use. The protection here lies not in an instrument of aggression but in a symbol of loving possession. The rod in the shepherd’s hand performs both these roles; so what’s the comfort for us here in the valley?

The rod helps us to know, as John Goldingay says, that having the Lord “with” us “is not merely a feeling. It doesn’t signify mere presence but also action. . . . This presence expresses itself by aggressive action to defeat enemies and thus protect the one to whom YHWH is committed.”

Numbered, Led, Protected, and Comforted

Defeating enemies and protecting sheep: both are present in the shepherding work of the Lord Jesus for us. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:27–28). Such language implies, of course, that some will attempt to snatch, that there are forces out there who seek to do sheep harm, and yet we’re encased in the shepherd’s strong hand, which is in turn grasped in the Father’s strong hand (v. 29).

This ready willingness to protect his sheep follows from the fact that Jesus knows exactly who belongs to him. He “calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice” (vv. 3–4).

Numbered by Jesus, we’re led by Jesus; led by Jesus, we’re protected by Jesus; and protected by Jesus, we’re comforted by Jesus.

Some of us reading these lines feel weak. The circumstances of life have pressed us down, and we feel broken. This shepherd, God’s servant, will not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick (Matt. 12:20, citing Isa. 42:3); he is tender to all our brokenness. But this same Jesus “will faithfully bring forth justice” (Isa. 42:3; Matt. 12:20).

So let the rod in Jesus’s hand also put strength into your failing heart; for, remember, he’s leading you through the valley, and on the other side is the house of the Lord where we’ll dwell forever. We should always remember how the Bible ends: on the other side of it all, the Lamb wins. The Lamb wins because he’s also a Lion. We should never mistake the tenderness of our shepherd for weakness or his care for us for carelessness about all that threatens us.

Member Profile

Janet Schucker is a new member of Northeast Park even though she has been regularly attending for six years. She is originally from Evansville. She is retired from working in apartment management. Janet loves to work word puzzles and read. Her best vacation was traveling across the country with a visit to Yellowstone National Park. Her favorite Bible character is David, and her favorite book of the Bible is Psalms. Janet's favorite Bible passage is the 23rd 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 leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (ESV) She is currently studying about how the church can be an authentic church. She was led to the Lord by her mother. Welcome Janet to Northeast Park!

Member Profiles

Larry & Donna Hazlewood are new members of Northeast Park. Both Larry and Donna were led to the Lord as children at Vacation Bible School. They are both originally from Evansville. Their ideal vacation would be in the Smoky Mountains. They have a cat named Sadie.

Larry retired as an electrical engineer with Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center and then as an environmental scientist with Southwest Indiana Brine Coalition. He enjoys hiking, genealogy, and reading. His favorite Bible character is Isaiah, and Larry's favorite book of the Bible is Philippians. Larry's favorite Bible passage is Matthew 6:33-34:

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (ESV)

Donna retired as a legal assistant with Wright, Evans & Daly law firm. She enjoys walking at Washington Square Mall, shopping, and collecting teapots and teddy bears. Her favorite Bible character is David. Her favorite book of the Bible is Psalms, and she especially likes the 23rd Psalm. Her favorite Bible verse is Proverbs 3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." (NIV)

Welcome Larry & Donna to Northeast Park!

In the June issue we will be featuring our graduates.

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May 2024

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------|---|---|
| Sundays: Sunday School at 9:30, Morning Worship at 10:45, Evening Study 6:00 pm. Wednesdays: Prayer Meeting and Bible Study at 6 pm, and Choir Practice at 7 pm | | | | | | Birthday * Anniversary ** |
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 Early Voting |
| 5 Art Hart * Deacon Nominations Church Picnic 5 PM | 6 | 7 Election Day | 8 Holly Williams * | 9 | 10 | 11 Dan James * Adult VBS 9-2:30 PM |
| 12 Brellynn Williams * Mother's Day No evening service | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 Mary James * Women's Breakfast Roca Bar 9 AM |
| 19 Graduate Recognition Women on Mission 5 PM Business Mtg 6 PM | 20 Winnie & Rhonda Nicely ** Deacons Mtg. 6 PM | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 Newsletter items due | 25 Steve Whicker * Randy Davis * Larry & Donna Hazlewood ** Men's Breakfast Golden Corral 8:30 AM |
| 26 | 27 Memorial Day | 28 | 29 Spaghetti Supper 5 PM | 30 | 31 Bill & Lois Akers ** J.D. & Gloria Strouth ** Game Night 6:30 PM | |

On May 11th from 9am to 2:30pm, we will be having an adult VBS led by Bruce Taylor. This year's theme is "Breaker Rock Beach: God's Rock-Solid Truth in a World of Shifting Sands." Theme verse is Romans 12:2.
God's Truth never changes!

All women are invited to join us for breakfast at the Roca Bar on Saturday, May 18, at 9:00 AM.

Change is good! And that's what we'll be doing in Women on Mission. Our May and June meetings will be combined into one get-together on May 19 at 5 pm as we see God working in Peru. God is still calling workers through Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action young people to share God's love in the Andes Mountains! Come and help us pray for faithful missionaries who go.

On May 29 at 5:00 PM, we will have a spaghetti supper before the 6:00 Prayer Meeting/Bible Study. Donations will be accepted, and any funds above the cost of the food will go into the Mission Trip fund.

Game night is May 31st at 6:30.

Come and bring your family and friends, favorite snacks and games, and enjoy some great fellowship!

VBS!!!

It is that time of year again! We are hosting a 5-day VBS, June 2nd-6th, from 6-8:30pm for ages 5-12.

Come with us to Breaker Rock Beach! We will be discovering how God's truth remains rock-solid even in a world of shifting sands.

Fellowship Circles: Enjoy the last month meeting with this circle! We will take a break from our fellowship circles for the months of June and July.

Want to get involved in a very relaxing ministry that only uses your hands as you sit comfortably in your own home? Join the group of ladies (and men, too) who are crocheting/knitting hats to keep international seafarers warm through a ministry provided by our own Chaplain Marshall Bundren in northern Indiana. Want more info? See Nancy Bennett to get started.

Old, usable eyeglasses lying around your house? Donate them to a ministry that travels to Honduras several times a year who share the gospel of Jesus to all who come for free eyeglasses. A donation box is in the church foyer.

May 05 - 11 – [Czechia](#), [Germany](#), [Denmark \(with Faroes & Greenland\)](#), [Liechtenstein](#), [North Dakota](#), [Lombard](#) and [Hebron](#)

May 12 - 18 – [Croatia](#), [Switzerland](#), [Italy \(with Sardinia & Sicily\)](#), [Malta](#), [New Jersey](#), [Lincoln Heights \(Woodmere & Iroquois Gardens\)](#) and [Fielding Court \(with Lant Manor\)](#)

May 19 - 25 – [Vatican City](#), [San Marino](#), [Monaco](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Rhode Island](#), [Windsong](#) and [Lawndale](#)

May 26 - June 01 – [Belgium](#), [Netherlands \(Holland with Aruba & others\)](#), [The United Kingdom \(with dozens of places\)](#), [Republic of Ireland](#), [New York State](#), [Arcadian Acres](#) and [Plaza Park](#)

New pictorial church directories are available at the welcome center. If you know of any information that needs updated, please notify Pastor JD. You can use your directory as you prayerfully consider who to nominate as deacons on May 5. Deacon elections are scheduled for June 2.

Crossover Update: A mission team from Northeast Park will partner with Indianapolis' Fall Creek Church, who will host a Disc-Golf clinic and competition to engage their community with the gospel on Saturday, June 8. We will set-up/ clean-up the venue, direct parking, greet guests, run check-in, distribute refreshments, etc. Let Pastor JD know soon if you are interested or have questions.