

The Bigger Picture

Doing Church Differently

13th September 2020

Welcome

Welcome to the 22nd
The Bigger Picture.

Do all things in the love
and strength of Jesus.

May you know God's love,
Mike & Sharon

Word for the week

Words of wisdom from our Pastor, Mike....

"No singing. No dancing. No swearing. This is a respectable house' - a message on an ancient sign I saw recently outside a Warwickshire residence. As we begin to think about going back to the building known by some as the 'house of God', I wondered what might constitute a respectable church in these changed times.



Well, what do we mean by respectable? My dictionary defines this word as meaning proper, correct and good. When I began to pastor a church for the first time, I had the considerable challenge of trying to survive with 12 members. Somebody told me that one day I would lead a proper church. However, I was already leading a proper church which tripled in membership within a few years. It was a proper church because those original 12 church members were so open to God's leading.

Another church I led included many ex-missionaries in the congregation. That church was very correct in terms of their orthodox Biblical beliefs. Heresy can never survive for long in a correct church. In 2020, people are generally allowed to make up their own truth. The unchanging truths of the Bible should make us very wary of this modern tendency.

Yet another church I led was a good church because the people there loved each other through thick and thin. Love is often talked about but not always put into practice. That particular church was also good at loving newcomers which often proved the difference between them staying rather than looking for an alternative church.

Let us try to ensure that MRBC is a respectable church in the future ie proper, correct and good. Perhaps, you will have a significant part to play in this!

Keep Praying

An encouraging word from Mike...

"Everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

Luke 11:10

How should we understand these words of Jesus? First of all, Jesus is encouraging us to pray. Secondly, he is urging us to pray with intensity. We may ask somebody for directions to a street. That doesn't require much effort. We may seek to locate that street. That requires a bit more effort. Finally,

we may knock on the appropriate door and if there is no answer, we might knock with increasing urgency and gusto until the door is opened. That might signify a certain amount of desperation.

God seems to love us to be persistent in our praying until he eventually gives us an answer or, until he tells us, via the Holy Spirit, to stop praying. So don't get discouraged when your prayers don't seem to be answered. Keep asking & seeking & knocking!



The Ministries of the Holy Spirit

Mike looks at the role of the Holy Spirit, the third part of the Trinity...

The Sanctifying Ministry

Last week we thought about the 'evangelistic' role of the Holy Spirit. He convicts people about their sin and he helps bring about their conversion.

This week we will consider the 'sanctifying' role of the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit make us holy? Amongst other ways, he does it through the 'Gifts of the Holy Spirit' and through the 'Fruit of the Holy Spirit'.

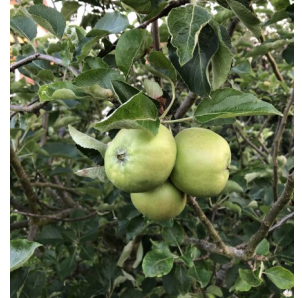
⁷A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. ⁹The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing.

1 Corinthians 12: 7-9

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are meant to build up the Christian community. We've been given the same Holy Spirit but different gifts for the edification of the church of Jesus Christ.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

(Galatians 5: 22-23)



The fruit of the Holy Spirit helps us to develop Christian character. Some people artificially manufacture some of these qualities by doing kind things or by keeping promises etc but may still be proud or self-righteous. When the Holy Spirit is producing these virtues in us, we are likely to be humble people and grateful to God for slowly transforming us!

Seeing the Bigger Picture...

Thoughts from Sharon.....

My son was telling me about the one way system now in place at his school which takes him round the English block and the science block just to get to the other end of the corridor!



A one way system means you can't go back the way you came.

Spiritually there is only one way to the Father and that is through the Jesus. 'The Way' isn't a one off event, it's a way of being, a journey.

It is a journey which should be one way, however, many Christians back slide when the troubles and busyness of the world distract them away from having Jesus as their focus.

In preparing for the All Age Talk on Nehemiah, I was struck by the events in chapter 8. The walls were finished and all the people gathered, asking Ezra to read the Book of The Law to them. When they realised just how far they had gone from following God's commands the people wept.

But Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites told the people not to weep, this was a sacred day, a day of joy and feasting for those who were lost had now returned to their Lord.

It can be easy to go the wrong way without realising and without intending to. It can be easy to let your focus slip, from having Jesus at the centre of your life.

During this forced exile from the church building, if you have started paying less attention to God, do as Ezra did, pick up your Bible and read. Spend time coming back into God's presence.

Then Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people chanted, "Amen! Amen!" as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

(Nehemiah 8:6)