

HEART-TO-HEART

We are reminded that Christ is in our hearts and we are in His and that love connects us all in unity.



Gratitude

Have you ever noticed that negative thoughts come to our mind so easily instead of positive thoughts? When driving, we let another driver come into our lane and expect a “thank you” wave or a blinking of hazard lights (seems that some drivers copy TheBus in blinking their lights as a thank you). When that “thank you” doesn’t come, do you yell out “you’re welcome!”? But how many times do we forget to thank

someone or even God when we are blessed? Maybe we get as good as we give?

As followers of Christ, we know that there are many things to be thankful for - even in our times of trouble and distress. This month, let’s practice gratitude towards others - our family, our friends, co-workers, and to the Lord.

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Colossians 4:2

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How Much Are You Willing To Give For Him?

by Jeanne Nagatani

Mark 12:43-44 (NIV) “Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They gave out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on.’”

After accepting Christ as my Lord and Savior, one thing from the Bible that bothered me for a long time was about tithing. Giving 10% when we were living from paycheck to paycheck was worrisome. There is no cushion for anything else. If an unexpected expense happened, I was worried about what Jesus would think of me because I gave less than 10% and felt guilty about not giving enough. More and more as I continued to study the Bible and learn about Jesus, my attitude on giving has changed. I now know that Jesus cares for me and as long as my giving is from my heart, He appreciates it.

BUT, that is not the point that I am trying to make. If a person is limited to tithing, what if they wanted to give more? Isn't it better to give with your heart instead? Shouldn't we ask, “How much has He given me and how much

am I willing to give back to Him for the love that He has shown me?”

Giving is between you and Jesus and is a response to His love.

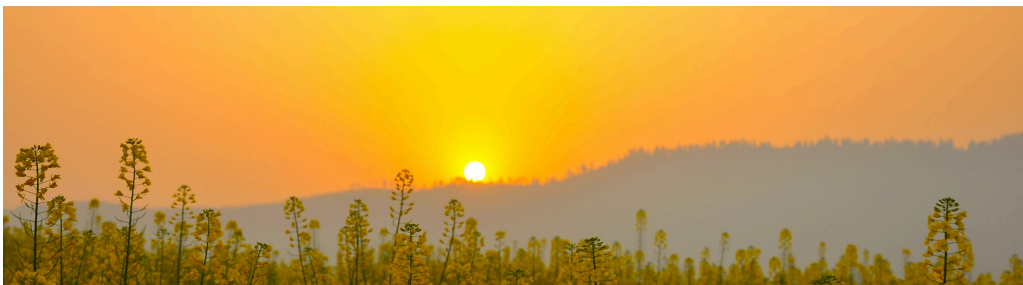
There is no way that I can ever repay Jesus for how much He has suffered for me. After watching the movie, “Passion of Christ,” and seeing how much Jesus suffered, I know that what our Jesus suffered is much, much more than what was shown on the screen. So, giving back to Jesus for what He has done for me, not only monetarily but also the time I spend in service to others, is the only way that I can repay Him, even though it may be inadequate compared to what He gave to me. I think that by giving to His church and by helping others, I make Him happy.

In a recent sermon, Pastor Josh Wroten who is the Pastor at Grace Church Fremont said that “Jesus’ kingdom is the kingdom of the heart.” I liked what he said about Jesus’ kingdom. I’m so glad that our Jesus is such a loving God. We all should try to become more like Him by loving God and loving others.



“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver.”

2 Corinthians 9:7



Our Desperate Need for Connection

by *Alli Oshiro*

Alli's journal entry from June 4, 2020

It's day 52 of work-at-home and stay-at-home orders. Words that come to mind to describe this whole experience are conflicting--exhausting yet restful, frustrating yet relaxing, confining & freeing, grieving a loss & receiving a gift. It's hard to put into exact words the extremes felt in a time filled with so much uncertainty.

My emotions are raw and frayed, I am on the verge of tears at any given moment, filled with joy one moment, devastated with sadness the next. Random things have made me cry: an email from my son's teacher saying we can go to the school to pick up his belongings; watching my preschooler attend his first Zoom meeting, hearing my 2 year old say a full sentence for the first time; laughing with Jason while watching a movie we never had the time to watch before. Time seems to be both increasing and depleting at the same time. Life in the last 52 days has been a collection of simple and yet profound moments that have begun to reshape how I see the world, God, family, and the church.

I vacillate between great days where I check all the things off my personal and professional to-do list: Skyler tuned into zoom preschool, check! Read books with Noah, check! Gave Jason time to focus on his work, check! Made a healthy, balanced meal for the family, Check! And then the next morning, I wake up and have the exact opposite kind of day: Skyler and Noah spent 90% of the day on an iPad. Jason had to manage all the fights, feed the kids all the meals, and monitor all the tantrums because I was stuck in a zoom call all day long. All our meals came from the freezer and microwave. The kids spent their day in pajamas stuck in their room because we both had to tend to work emergencies. Being completely consumed with guilt because while physically, I am here, mentally I may as well be in my office for 12 hours a day. I feel lazy because I've stood up twice to eat and go to the bathroom in the last 8 hours. How is there more work now??? Then we go to sleep, wake up the next morning, and do it all over again.

Just when I think I'm over it, when the crying has stopped, when I've gotten a grip on this "new normal" (a term I've come to hate), something is said in a meeting or on the news or in a text or in a children's book, and the tears will start again. Life as we know it will never be the same.

Fast forward to September 14, 2024 - Real Life Ministries

Back in June of 2020, I could have never imagined what "today" would be like. First, that Jason and I are at WOCC and second, how meeting Paul, Debe, Dave, and Jeannelle from Real Life ministries would feed and nurture the part of our souls that desire connection. Real Life ministries embodies living out how Jesus loved and connected with those around Him. The methodology is built upon authentic, deep, vulnerable relationships. The kind of connection we so desperately craved during lockdown 4 years ago.

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A memory from the pandemic lockdown.

"May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you."

Psalm 33:22

Our Desperate Need for Connection

(cont.)

While there was some fear about potentially never getting back to normal again, never getting to go to another graduation party or wedding, never getting another family dinner or holiday party, the fear was about so much more. Will I ever get to connect with my loved ones in person? Will we have to live like this for the rest of our lives? And for those we lost during COVID, this was the reality. We didn't get to say our goodbyes whether at the bedside or at a funeral. That uncertainty was our reality and looking to the future, toward a time where we could one day sit in church or small group together in person, seemed nearly impossible.

The world that has emerged out of the global pandemic is not the same society that went in. We are more divided, defensive, and more easily offended than ever before, unable to see past external differences to the soul beneath. Our desperate need for connection is blaringly obvious. Vulnerability and authenticity is not easy, it is messy and uncomfortable, but the benefits are life-changing. These past couple of months at West Oahu and the last 2 weeks with our friends from Real Life has shown us a glimpse of this type of meaningful, authentic connection and what could be coming on the horizon. To me, on day 52 of the pandemic in 2020 this would seem impossible but for me today, in 2024, I can't help but be filled with excitement and genuine joy for what God is doing in our very midst. Because ultimately don't we all crave safety and connection, bringing our whole self without fear of judgment? To be loved by the love of Christ, from the depths of our fear, worries, and shame, and raised up to be the light in the world, a world that is desperately needing more light (whether they realize it or not).



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"The great thing to remember is that though our feelings come and go God's love for us does not."

C.S. LEWIS

*Please feel free to contact:
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about this newsletter or to
submit an article.*