



## From the Desk of Pastor Meyer

This month, I want to share three specific notes of encouragement for you.

The first is to encourage you in reading your Bible. For many, daily Bible reading is a challenge. I hear three primary reasons. The first is prioritization, making time to spend with the Word. A simple trick is to plug a time into your smart phone calendar, so it reminds you to do it while also preserving the time for reading. They say if you do something consecutively ten-to-fifteen times, it becomes a habit. The second reason Bible reading is a challenge is because it can be difficult to understand. If it's a translation issue, shop around or use a free Bible app to test out different translations. As much as I love the King James Version (KJV) I never recommend it to anyone. The Old English language is a barrier for most modern readers. If you insist on the King James, try the New King James instead (NKJV). It retains the "flavor" of the KJV while being much more readable. The final reason Bible reading can be challenging is that the Old Adam or Old Eve within us sees the Bible as ancient and impractical, lacking meaning for our day and time. Repent of such foolishness and drown the old self again. The Word of God is always living and active, useful for learning, teaching and growing in righteousness. The Spirit is always working in the Word, even when you don't realize it. Still, we can get in the way of His work – especially if we grow frustrated and don't find meaning in what is being read.

If you find yourself in that third category, may I suggest buying and reading Ten Questions to Ask Every Time You Read the Bible by LCMS pastor Andrew R. Jones. It's a fairly quick and easy read. In the book, he gives the reader ten questions to ask of what you are reading in the overall scope and purpose of the Bible as a whole, what it was saying in the immediate context, and what it is saying today as you read it. His ten questions are: 1) who is the enemy in this passage; 2) how is the enemy defeated; 3) whose point of view am I reading; 4) where is the Lord in this passage; 5) where am I in this passage; 6) how did I get here; 7) what happens next; 8) what have I experienced that connects with this passage; 9) what am I feeling; 10) where have I heard this before? With each question, he offers his rationale behind why the question is important, he offers examples from Bible passages, and some final guiding thoughts. In short, it's a good book on "How to read and better understand the Bible." It might also make a worthy gift for a young Christian or someone who is new to the faith.

We continue to be blessed with many folks visiting with us on Sunday mornings. My second note of encouragement is for you to continue practicing hospitality as you see a new face. You be part of our outreach team. Be gentle. Be friendly. Be kind. Be genuine. Invite them to sit with you, or if they are already seated and are alone, ask if you can sit next to them. Introduce yourself and share a little bit about yourself, Zion, and the Mission Valley community. Be aware: if they seem a little lost during the service, offer a little guidance about the liturgy, the bulletin

and the hymnal. After the service, introduce them to others by name. Get them a coffee cup – they are in the narthex – and ask them to fill out our guest book so Seda and I can get in touch with them in the days ahead. Invite them to return, and work on remembering their name so you can welcome them again the next time you see them.

While my list began with encouraging you to manage your spiritual health by reading the Bible, let me encourage you to take care of your mental health as well. We are living in stress-filled times. We use the expression that things “weigh” on us. Some days, it feels that socially, economically, politically, personally, things are physically pressing down on us. I have a prayer book on my shelf called *Every Moment Holy, vol 1*, which I have written about before. In the book is a prayer that reads, in part:

*Give us discernment in the face of troubling news reports. Give us discernment to know when to pray, when to speak out, when to act, and when to simply shut off our screens and our devices and to sit quietly in Your presence, casting the burdens of this world upon the strong shoulders of the One alone who is able to bear them up. Amen.*

Some people, sadly, are overwhelmed by things to the point that they can see only one final answer. We saw this in the summer when a young teenager was bullied in Cuero and she felt suicide was her only respite. This isn't to say that those pressures aren't real, but suicide and self-harm is never the answer to those problems. Write these down and save them in your phone, if not for yourself, for a friend or loved one:

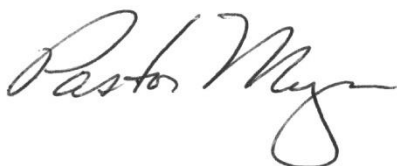
- Crisis text line: text HOME to 741741
- National Suicide hotline: Call or text 988, or chat online: [988lifeline.org/chat/](https://988lifeline.org/chat/)
- Veterans hotline: call 988, option 1 OR text 838255
- Farmers & Ranchers hotline: call 833-897-2474

All are all free services, staffed by professionals, trained to help you in your darkest, hardest moments. In case of immediate, emergency care, call 911. If it's not yet a crisis, don't be afraid to seek out a therapist to talk with. I have an excellent one here in Victoria and have a couple of references if you need to see someone. You are always welcome to see me as well for prayer, blessing, and spiritual encouragement.

Years ago, I had a suicidal member call me on my landline. She had the means, she had the plan, and she had the desperation to do the act. With her on the phone in my left ear, I was talking to 911 dispatch with my cell phone in my right ear. She was madder than a wet hen when the cops knocked on her door, and later when I finally got to see her, she refused to talk to me, but those people saved her life that day. I told her I was simply grateful that she had plenty of time to be mad at me. I think that lasted about two days before she called me to thank me for being sneaky and making that 911 call while distracting her.

So, as I conclude, with a final note of encouragement, read through these pages and see what is all going on this month. Pay special attention to the trunk or treat event the last weekend of October. If you have questions about it, see Megan, or scan the flyer QR code for ideas.

Peace & joy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Megan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.