



Community

Mon, May 31, 2021 - Remembering on Memorial Day

Most of us don't think about a lot on Memorial Day, except perhaps for what we're going to eat or where we're going to go. The weekend unofficially launches the beginning of summer, when kids are out of school and vacations are anticipated and we look forward to regular visits to the pool or the reservoir (and hopefully a regular summer after last year!).

But before you get started with the activities of the day (or perhaps after it's over and you're getting back into your activities for the week), think for a moment about Memorial Day. Officially it's a day to "remember those who have died in service of the United States of America." This includes hundreds of thousands of men and women who paid the ultimate price--their lives. What they did was the greatest act of selflessness, service, and love.

There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:13, NLT)

Great love starts with us thinking less about ourselves and more about others. That's what people have been doing in the USA for over 200 years. It's what people have been doing throughout the world for even longer. It's what Jesus did for us nearly 2000 years ago.

Today, would you spend a few moments remembering and thanking God for those who gave their lives so you could live in freedom? Thank Him especially for Jesus, who, through His death and resurrection, made it possible for you to experience real and abundant life.

Never throughout history has a man who lived a life of ease left a name worth remembering. (Theodore Roosevelt)

Tue, Jun 1 - Starting Place for Community

Who is concerned about you? Who encourages you? Who are you concerned about? Who do you encourage?

Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer. (Hebrews 10:24-25, NCV)

Following Christ is the best way to live, but it's not easy. When we follow Him we are going against the grain of our human nature and going against the grain of our society. We also have an enemy who works against us--if he can't keep us from God, he will work to keep us from trusting what God says and following the Bible. This is why it's so important for us to develop relationships with other believers--to live in real community. God designed us for community, and He designed the church to provide community. One place to start developing community is in the 100--gathering with others each week for worship and instruction. The Bible reminds us that this is an important habit we should develop. So how are you doing at this aspect of living in (and creating) community? What will you do to make it a greater priority in your life?

God created us with a hunger for relationship--for relationship with Him and with our fellow people. The soul cannot prosper without being connected to others. (Henry Cloud)

Wed, Jun 2 - Hard Work

Think about your relationships. Likely none of your significant relationships developed without you having to work at it. They may have started without much effort--there may have been common interests and such that launched the relationship. But for them to continue required work on your part--often hard work. Why does it take work? Because two humans are involved. And humans have issues. But it sometimes takes time for those issues to surface, and then we have to make a decision: Will I work through the issues seeking to build the relationship or will I shut down and end the relationship? There's really no middle ground, because either we are building relationships or we are allowing them to die.

You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor. (James 3:18, MSG)

For you to experience the life God wants for you, you need others who can walk with you in this journey of life. You need connections with a group of people--a community--who will be there to support, encourage, and help you. And others need a community who can support, encourage, and help them. But developing this community requires hard work, not only because we are human but also because we have an enemy who wants to destroy us or at least distract us from God's way. And God's way involves living in community with others. What difference might it make for you to get connected with a small group of people? What do you need to do to develop these connections in your life? How will you get started on it today?

As I look back over my mountains of growth and compare them to the molehills where I stagnated, community often made the difference. (Mary E. DeMuth)

Thur, Jun 3 - Interdependent Community

Who depends on you? Who do you depend on? Most of us are ok if there are people who are dependent on us, but we don't like it so much if we are dependent on others. In fact, many of us pride ourselves on being independent--we insist that we can take care of ourselves! The problem with that mindset is when you get in a situation where you need someone else. If you think you'll never be in such a situation, then you'll find out differently soon enough!

The Bible gives us a picture of what God wants for us--interdependence.

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part. (1 Corinthians 12:25 MSG)

In the life of faith, those who are the most mature realize that independence is not what God has in mind for His children. God intended for us to live in community with each other--to care for each other and help each other. Think about your body as an example. Have you ever hurt your little toe? It doesn't seem like much, but that one little toe can impact how you walk and what you do! God designed our body parts to be dependent on each other. He also designed the body of Christ (the church) where the parts (the believers who make up the church) are dependent on each other. This means learning to give and receive. It means doing for others and allowing them to do for you. This is the essence of community. How are you experiencing community with others? What step will you take today to get involved with a few other people with whom you can do life together?

You can try, but you can't live life well on your own. We all need other people--to walk with us, to work with us, and to watch out for us. (Rick Warren)

Fri, Jun 4 - The Power of One

You probably know what it's like to make a decision and then move forward with your plan . . . and then face a problem you didn't anticipate or fail in a major way. Decision making is not always easy in the best of times, but when you are a follower of Christ you have an enemy, Satan, who is working to derail your faith journey. That's why you shouldn't travel alone on your journey.

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. (Proverbs 27:17, NLT)

God designed you for community--to have a group of people walking with you in this journey of life. But beyond even a small group (of 10), the Bible says you will benefit from building a relationship with 1 other person. A small group of people seeking God or even just 1 who is following Christ can give you encouragement, support, wisdom, and strength for your journey of life. These others can provide perspective, insight, and potential solutions you may not consider. That's what it means for a person to be sharpened. Do you have a group of 10 you can do life with? Do you have another person walking with you on your journey? If not, what is stopping you from building

relationships with a few other people so you can experience all of life God desires for you? What will you do about this today?

In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit. (Albert Schweitzer)