August is here and school is about to start. I want to encourage you to pray for those who are beginning preschool all the way to those who will be Seniors. Growing up in today’s world seems to be filled with far more challenges than when I was growing up. But then again, every youth generation had their own challenges to face in their day. There are those who can recall memories of living in homes with no indoor plumbing or T.V. Others can recall times when there was no microwaves, gaming was batting a white dot back and forth across a screen, and cell phones were only seen when Capt. Kirk of Star Trek used his flip top “Communicator” to say “Beam me up Scotty!”

In those days, many kids grew up facing peer pressure, bullies, and broken home issues just as the kids deal with today. Back then, kids in school mainly focused on the three R’s- Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Teachers knew all the students because they knew their families, they watched them grow up, and they had an idea of what challenges they faced when they came to school.

Though kids today face some of the same challenges kids in the past, yet emerging technology, social media, and an ever-changing culture have amplified the struggles they face. Today, 50% of students are being raised in broken homes as the result of abuse, addictions, and family dysfunctions which make lasting impacts on those kids. Add to that peer pressure, bullying (from physical to cyber), pressure to succeed, and being challenged to learn more at an earlier age, you have kids that are battling depression and mental illness issues, self worth issues, and literal identity crisis issues. According to statistics gathered by those at Stageoflife.com, one of every two kids have battled with some form of mental illness that involve depression and anxiety. Ironically, though a high percentage of kids hold honesty, trust, and friendship as key elements of relationships, 70% of those kids text, Snapchat, and Instagram one another to control, dictate, and double check their relationships because of distrust, suspicion and doubt.

Then there is the education factor which is putting more emphasis on teaching kids more at younger ages when many of those same kids are struggling to learn who they are in light of their personal development issues.

The good news is that there are 50% of students being raised in stable homes where many know who they are as children of God. They have been loved with the unconditional love of Christ and are encouraged to explore what God wants to do with their lives. They are challenged, disciplined and prayed for by parents who are doing their best to raise their kids in a Christ-centered, loved filled home. They will be the ones God will use to come alongside those kids whose lives are falling apart leaving them feeling alone, depressed and discouraged. Let us pray for all the students heading to school this year.
At the same time, there are teachers following Christ’s call to serve and teach the students under their care. Along with teaching today’s kids the 3 R’s of education, teachers find themselves wearing lots of other hats such as coach, music director, etc.. Today’s teachers have accepted their divine call to make a positive difference in the lives of those students under their care. For some of those kids who are being brought up in complicated and challenging life situations, the teacher, though limited, may give them opportunities to be cared for, loved with a hug, and taught that education is a means God wants to use to equip them to be whom God created them to be. Let us pray for the teachers called by God in this new school year to get to know, make a difference, and teach the students under their care that God has a plan for their lives starting with pre-school to the time they graduate from high school.

Peace,

Jon

12 Step Sermon Series available in DVD or manuscript format.

Odds are you may know someone who is struggling with addiction issues. I am doing a biblical study on the 12 step program to help people realize that these steps are grounded in God’s word and are applicable to wherever people are at in their faith journey.

The 12 steps were first defined by Bill W. and Dr. Bob in 1939 in New York, but what we are learning is that these 12 steps were first established in God’s Word.

In contrast to A.A., N.A., E.A., and whatever _.A. group there is that adapts the 12 steps to their specific struggle, what I am learning is that addictions are not limited to drinking or drug type addiction issues, but that addictions can also be defined by one’s self ego, pride, and even materialism and social issues. Whenever one depends on someone or something else for meeting their needs other than God, they are vulnerable to addiction issues.

Al-Anon is a support group offered to those who are in relationships with those going through addiction issues and are given the 12 steps to help them understand the recovery process. For me, church is the ultimate support system for those who struggle with Sin Addictions. As one old preacher once shared, “God did not call the church to be a social club for Saints, but a hospital for Sinners.” For those who want to know more about the 12 steps, let me encourage you to request the sermon series (DVD or Manuscript). I offer the following as additional resources:
Caregivers & Teachers for Children’s Church for August:

August 4th- Deborah Faraone and Shannon Harris
August 11th- Polly Pilkey and Veronica Taylor
August 18th- Keri Bivens and Candace Reagan
August 25th- Jessica and Phillip Bivens

The youth will be traveling to Lake Winnie on Aug 24th

We will meet at the church around 8:30am. There is no age limit for this trip, so young and old alike can join us.

Frank Carroll and Emilie Prince are getting married!

August 24 @ 1pm, Frank and Emilie invites their church family at Center Church to join them as they celebrate the Holy Union of Marriage. There will be a reception in the fellowship hall following the marriage celebration.
Men’s Bible Study meets on Saturday’s at 9am
Fenton McCahill will be doing an indepth study of who God is as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Trinity) with a special focus on God, the Father.

Session and Deacons are scheduled to meet on August 15 at 5pm and 6 pm.

Presbytery Mtg. is Saturday, August 17 at First Presbyterian Church, Knoxville.

Another successful Mission trip to WARM (Wilmington Area Rebuilding Ministry)
This year, we helped pastor Rhonda make final preparation to return to her home after it was flooded with 3 feet of water 9 months earlier by Hurricane Florence. Weasel and Lucas Pilkey finished two bathrooms while the rest of the group laid flooring, trimmed out door jams, installed doors and put down and painted base board trim.

We then helped Kathy Karp with some repairs installing two doors, repair some damaged guttering, replaced her fence gate and built a cover for her porch. What a blessing to minister to others!
To all kids returning to school in August

If you see any of the following:
- Another student struggling to make friends.
- Another student being bullied.
- A student that is shy or not with the “in” crowd.
- A student who eats lunch by themselves.

PLEASE be a leader!
Say hi. Smile at them.
Ask if you can sit with them at the lunch table.
Include them in ANY activity.

You never know what that person might be facing inside or outside of school.

Your kindness will make a HUGE difference in someone's life!

PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS SHOULD REPOST THIS!

Taken from a Facebook post: