

Dickens

Digest

March 2023

New Mercies Every Morning

Every other morning I wake up at 5am to take Morgan to work. On the other mornings I'm usually awakened at 5:30 by the above image. The sun shines right into my bedroom window. It always reminds me of what Jeremiah says in Lamentations 3, "the Lord's mercies...are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." I am currently finishing up teaching a three week course on Old Testament Survey for the Bible institute so the quote has been on my mind recently. Since the beginning of 2023 much has happened. The year began slow enough, but by the end of January I had already made a weeklong Bible institute trip, flattened two tires on said trip, celebrated my 45th birthday and almost did not get back home. God was good, showed great mercy and got us home. In February, Aydan got to learn how to milk a cow owned by one of our church members and another church member brought his brother by so that we could harvest fresh honey from the beehives we have here.



Since the beginning of the year, I have gotten more involved in the organization and preparation for the Calvary Baptist Ministry Training Center. The church here continues to move forward and we have had a couple families come back to church. The weekly home Bible studies that we hold are producing results and we just had a new young family visit for the first time. Unfortunately, the young man Lucas, who was assisting me, felt that he should return to his home city. We felt for some time like this might happen and have seen that he was not ready to be the pastor here. The Lord has a man for this church, so we depend on His mercies. I continue to help the new church plant in the state to our north and God is opening the door to help with a new church plant on the way to where we hold Bible institute in the interior. Every "morning" produces more opportunities to tell about the "mercies of the Lord!"



Prayer Requests

- ◆ Morgan future ministry
- ◆ Evangelism and discipleship
- ◆ Church families/couples
- ◆ Church building decisions
- ◆ Petrolina Training Center Project
- ◆ Smothers Family in Teresina



In Other News

Morgan has been approved as an associate missionary with our mission World Wide New Testament Baptist Missions. Along with the blessing and approval of our home church Roanoke Island Baptist Church and Pastor Scott Baxley, he is making preparations to raise some temporary support and begin a two year internship with our missionary colleague James Nash in Petrolina organizing the CTMBC (Calvary Baptist Ministry Training Center). Morgan is super excited about what God is doing in his life and we are excited for him. He is working his way through his paperwork for the mission and will be contacting pastors and churches in the near future about this ministry. Due to the fact that Bro. Nash suffered a heart attack just a couple of weeks ago makes Morgan's transition to this new phase of life and ministry that much more important. Thankfully, Bro. Nash is recovering well and should be fine, but he definitely will need help getting this ministry started. Planting churches while training servants for the ministry are the goals. Morgan has a lot to learn, but we believe he has a good foundation. Please pray with us for him, his future and this nascent ministry. The interior needs Jesus Christ.

10 ways to neither lose nor allow anything to steal your peace



6. To avoid, where possible, things outside of my ministry (my “ministry” being husband, family, church, work) that make me tense or put me on edge. The Lord didn’t promise me no stress, but He is not pleased when I choose it for myself.

This idea is a real sticking point for me. I have always struggled (and I’m betting many of you have, too) with letting worry and stress dominate my thoughts, actions, and habits. While it’s scientifically clear that worry and stress can be extremely destructive, certain aspects of my health also bear daily witness to that fact. Worry (my choice) and stress (sometimes not my choice) have taken a permanent toll on my body AND my mind. What I wouldn’t give, humanly speaking, to be able to rewind the clock and make my earlier self apply truths that God continues to lovingly draw me to, as I walk with Him through this stressful life. Of course, such proposed clock-rewinding begs the question ... would I have come to understand those truths without the worry and stress that God

used to highlight my need for them? I don’t know. That’s why it’s good that God is in control and not me! That’s why it’s so important that I trust to Him, both the stressful moments and every aspect of their consequences.

But the main thought I want to convey, with #6 on my “keep your peace” list, involves my daily choices in this vein.

It may be a decision to not take on more than I’m realistically able to handle, being honest with myself about my time and abilities. When I over-commit, I am creating stress for both myself and those around me. I may have very godly desires and may agree to do or be something with a fervent desire to be a blessing. But I must be careful to order my days according to the ministries that God has for me - first, my husband and family, then my church ministries, then any other work that is pleasing to Him. Because I was raised to believe that saying “yes” is as good as a contract (and I get very stressed out if I end up not fulfilling such), sometimes I have to say “no.”

Now, to demonstrate the other side of this coin ... The above thoughts are not advocating idle hands or the self-indulgence of saying “no” just because I’m having a bad day. Rather, this decision must be based in logical realism, yes, but before that, in a close walk with God. I can look at a calendar and make what looks like a perfect schedule. I can refuse to deviate from that based on the fact that God is a God of order. Of course, He is! And schedules are needful. But what happens when something off-schedule demands my attention? Do I walk closely enough with my Lord to know when He would have me set aside my schedule for an interruption that HE ordained? Walking with Him and knowing His heart via His Word, I will have more wisdom in how to use my time and talents; and, thus, I am choosing less stress.

To keep my peace, I also need to know when to let something go. The following may seem insignificant and even silly to many, but it was something that came to be given up in my life. I have always loved make-up. I have a scandalous amount of eye shadow. As my life grew more and more busy, my time for “putting on my face” became more and more scarce. But going out of the house without full makeup was not-to-be-suggested! We usually left for church (and visits and other things) late or right under the gun and frequently short-tempered, in part, because of my get-ready routine. As more and more things demanded my time, God helped me re-evaluate and realize that the moments of choosing and carefully applying my beloved eye shadow could be discarded. No, it wasn’t wrong, but it was part of some needless stress. I still have my eye shadow collection, and on VERY rare occasions I still use it. LOL! But I’m thankful that, if I’m paying attention, God will carefully point out to me even “little” things to help me keep my peace.

Other peace-promoting decisions may have to do with ...

- Managing my attitude in the middle of busyness. No idea where that hits you, but here, it’s right between the eyes.

cringing with guilt I’m ashamed to admit the way stress and worry often adversely affect my attitude and interactions with others - mostly my family.

- The challenge of carefully curating that which I watch and listen to. For me, this has to do primarily with news and particular genres of television. I’m in no way a fan of horror, but I used to enjoy a good mystery or investigation. However, years ago, some of the engrossing mysteries I enjoyed watching began to delve closer to mild horror than I was able to handle. Some of the scenarios portrayed in the shows, those “based on real life,” began to plague my thoughts without me even realizing it.

When I finally came to understand what was disturbing my peace and my sleep, it was a no-brainer to eliminate those shows from my entertainment diet. Even certain news articles, I now know I should avoid. While I’m no proponent of burying one’s head in the sand where current events are concerned, I’m also not going looking for things that will keep me up at night.

And that brings me back to the main point. Life is stressful. God never promised otherwise. However, I do not honor Him nor can I effectively serve Him, when I choose stress for myself. The daily decisions to NOT choose stress aren’t necessarily easy; but His care for me far surpasses anything that wants to cause me worry here on earth. I Peter 5:7

May I take advantage of the peace He offers me in that care!