



The 4th Focus

Enlightened

During a recent Wednesday morning Bible study, while eating a NBR at New Beginnings, Jeff said, "Saul had an enlightening experience on the road to Damascus." He then looked around the table with a smirk on his face, waiting to see who would catch his pun.

Since that day, I've occasionally found myself reflecting on Saul's experience on that fateful road. Prior to being blinded by the light, Saul was a zealous and faithful Jew, and there was no part of him that liked the Christ follower movement. He dedicated his life to persecuting believers, arresting them, and Acts 8:1 makes it clear that as Stephen was being murdered, "Saul was there, giving approval to his death." Saul was on a mission.

There is no place in Scripture where we are told that Saul first tried to reason with Christ followers. He may have, but by all appearances in Acts, he simply acted like a violent enforcer for the Jewish faith.

If you're familiar with Acts 9, then you know that while Paul was on his way to rough up some more Christ followers, Jesus intervened. There was a bright light, and Jesus spoke to him from heaven. One fascinating aspect of that chapter is that Jesus doesn't ask Saul to repent, and he doesn't say, "Do you want me to live in your heart?" Jesus essentially says, "I am the one you are persecuting, now get up and go to Damascus and you'll be told what to do from there."

Jesus then gives Saul a vision of Ananias coming to his house to restore his sight.

Jesus then tells Ananias to go and give Saul back his sight, and when Ananias rightfully responds with some fear, knowing who Saul is, Jesus says, "Saul is the one who is going to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and the people of Israel."

Saul was against Jesus, but because of Jesus, Saul's heart was softened to love Jesus. Saul had a mission to destroy the church, but because of Jesus, Saul was given a mission to plant churches.

Saul is the least likely person to represent Jesus, but in a moment of complete surprise to everyone, including Saul, Jesus intervened.

Saul's conversion shows that the love of Christ can change any heart, even the most hard hearted person you know.

If you haven't already started praying for that person, get on your knees and ask God to move in that person's life so they will fall in love with Jesus. Pray for an opening to share Jesus with them. God could use some supernatural experience to transform them, but more often than not, God will use people like you and me. Listen, even if the person becomes more hard hearted, and resistant, never, ever stop praying for them or showing them unconditional love.

Jesus could literally show up at any point and change the heart of that person, and give them a new mission to serve him!

While you are praying for the people in your life who need Jesus, don't forget to pray for yourself! You and I are followers of Jesus, and we love him deeply, but that doesn't mean we don't struggle with hard heartedness, too. We have sins that we like, people we don't like, parts of Scripture we want to ignore, and secrets we don't think Jesus can handle. Jesus is calling to you through Scripture, through other believers, through his Holy Spirit, and Jesus is inviting you into a deeper relationship with him. Jesus is offering you freedom from the parts of your heart that are hard, and wants you to experience the fullness of life with him.

It is time to pay attention to what Jesus may be speaking into your heart. Learn to listen to his voice, and be prepared for what he may call you to. Jesus isn't finished with any of us, and he's inviting us all to love him deeper, and step into a new mission to serve.

- Pastor Eric

New Member



From the time she was a baby, Megan has been a unique, creative, and funny girl. God truly gifted our family and our church with a tender hearted and loving gift in Megan. We're so happy she has chosen to publicly follow God and cannot wait to see how He continues to use her to truly see His people and share His heart for them. - Beau & Beka

Megan McDowell is going into the 6th grade at Central Woodlands. Art is her favorite subject due to the fact she has a cool art teacher and she is thinking about being an art teacher as a career.

She enjoys reading realistic fiction and for TV, The Pioneer Woman, is at the top of her list. She is interested in watching this show as Megan enjoys baking with her mom and cooking with her dad.



When she isn't in the kitchen she loves to sew and craft and can't wait to start sewing her own clothes. Who knows someday we may see her name on a cookbook or clothing label.

At church she is involved in GEMS and Youth Group. Plus she is happy to help out wherever needed. Megan wanted to join church because she is ten years old and felt it was time to officially join and be a part of 4th.

I (Becky Berrevoets) had the honor of mentoring Megan McDowell for her profession of faith. Megan and I shared our time together going over different Scriptures, different real life situations and challenging each other to spend more time in the Word. Megan knew most of the verses we reviewed (and she even knew some by heart, be sure to ask her about the fruits of the spirit). She knows that she needs to love God always and to ask for forgiveness when she does something wrong. Meg knows that she needs to think about her actions, be sure to care for others and always be nice to others. She is aware that some things in life that happen to us are good and bad, but our bodies are a temple and Christ lives in all of us and can help us with our thoughts and help us through the good and the bad. Most of all, Megan knows that she's a sinner and that Jesus died on the cross to save her from her sins.

We had a great time getting to know each other better during our time together, too! She is such a fun, free spirited and honest girl who loves pineapple and bacon pizza the best! She is always good for a hug or two as well!

Summer Birthdays

July

2 - Jerry Wierenga
8 - Connie Larson
8 - Jeff Broene
13 - Dave Portinga
14 - Ed Reitsma
22 - Jonathan Brinks
23 - Avery Gleason
23 - Kate Schalk
24 - Wendy Wetzal
28 - Branson Parler



August

3 - Charlton Meyer
2 - Gail Spangler
5 - C. Scherpenisse
5 - Ella Schalk
5 - Jackson Bolt
5 - Alexis Bolt
11 - Cale Broene
12 - Rick Berthiaume
15 - Betty Webster
17 - Darold Parks
21 - Christian Parler
22 - Jacob Tubergen
24 - Lynn Simone

Kids Hope USA Mentors Needed

Mentors are needed for the upcoming school year. Do you have an hour a week to make a lifelong difference in the life of a child?



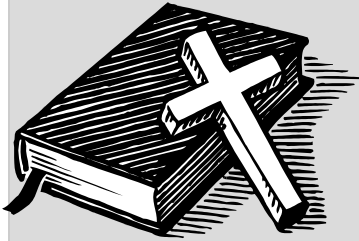
Qualifications to be a mentor:

- At least 16 years old
- Have an hour a week during the school day
- Love children
- Enjoy parties ... we hold 5-6 events throughout the year for our students and their families
- Regularly attend 4th Church

If you meet the above qualifications, please contact Mary Kay Townley at 616.454.1561 or email: kidshopeusa@fourthchurch.com to learn more about joining our Kids Hope team!



The Church Before the Reformation



The Great Schism and the Councils

Conflict between the French monarchy and the papacy led the traditional center of Catholicism to be moved from Rome to Avignon from 1309-77. During these years, French leadership dominated the church. After the papacy returned to Rome, the leadership at Avignon refused to surrender authority, so two (and sometimes three) popes were in power at the same time. This division became known as the Great Schism.

Various nations generally lined up behind each pope. The Avignon papacy was primarily supported by present day France, Spain, Scotland and part of Germany. The Roman papacy was primarily supported by what is now Italy, England, Scandinavia, Bohemia, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal.

Long before all this took place, two writings proposed replacing papal authority with representative church government. Dante Alighieri's *On Monarchy* (c. 1311) taught that civil government and the papacy were both arms of God. The former was instituted to maintain order, but if a pope failed to establish religious reform, then the emperor could control both. The *Defensor Pacis* (1324) of Marsilius of Padua and John of Jandun taught that sovereignty in the church and states was centered in people. Real power existed in the hands of representatives of the entire church meeting in biblically guided councils.

The Council of Pisa (1409) deposed Benedict XIII at Avignon and Gregory XII at Rome, naming Alexander V as the single pope. However, neither refused to step down, so there were now three popes. Alexander, the first Greek pope in 700 years, died the following year and was succeeded by John XXIII. Although no lasting results were accomplished at Pisa, the council showed that while the papacy was divided, the church itself remained united.

The Council of Constance (1414-18) was the largest ecclesiastical gathering of the Middle Ages. Pope John XXIII immediately sought to seize control through the powerful Italian delegation but was thwarted after the council adopted a one nation-one vote rule. The three above mentioned popes were deposed and Martin V (1417-31) was elected. John was later tried by the council on 70 counts, including adultery. A decree called *Frequens* promised that regular councils would follow. It might be remembered that it was at Constance that the reformer John Huss was executed.

Martin called later councils at Pavia (1423) and Basil which met from 1431-49. He died soon after the Basil council began. His successor Eugene IV (1431-39) tried without success to break up the Basil council which declared itself superior to the pope. He eventually called his own rival council at Ferrara, later moving it to Florence.

Eugene proposed reuniting the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches, divided since the ninth century. A delegation of 700 Orthodox church leaders were on hand. Although doctrinal similarities and differences were discussed, the proposed union had no real spiritual motivation. The Byzantine Empire, fighting for its life against the Turks, hoped to get western military aid. Eugene hoped to make himself head over all Christendom. Seeing a momentous opportunity, most of the Basil delegates flocked to Eugene. Those left behind deposed him and elected Felix V (1439-49) who held on for a decade until the Basil Council disbanded after naming Eugene's successor Nicholas V. (1447-55). From that point until today, the Roman Catholic Church has had only one pope at any given time.

As a postscript, the reunification of the Eastern and Western churches seemed assured after articles of union were published at Constantinople on December 11, 1452. However, the promised armada of 302 warships never materialized and the Byzantine Empire was quickly swept away by Muslim forces. The union that never existed anywhere except on paper was widely condemned and formally nullified in 1472.

Other than healing the Great Schism, the councils produced no lasting reforms, and set the stage for the Reformation a few decades later. The papacy regained control over the church, although many of the popes in office during the 68 years between the end of the councils and the Martin Luther's 95 Theses were among the worst in church history.

- Eric O'Brock

Next - The Church Before the Reformation—The Papacy

Inclusion Column



This month the inclusion team is introducing the “fidget basket” in the back of church. You may have heard of the term “fidget” as many kids have played with fidget spinners. To give you a fuller picture of what we’re talking about, let’s back up a bit and first talk about attention.

According to an article written on the science behind fidgets, Heather Greutman (2017), shares the facts that the average adult can pay attention for 20 minutes and the average youth can pay attention for 10-15 minutes. To override our lack of attention one can find a way to focus by using slight movement - maybe this is twirling your hair, tapping your foot, chewing gum, clicking your pen, etc. For individuals on the autism spectrum, those with ADD/ADHD, or other developmental difficulties, focusing can prove even more challenging. While mixed results have been found according to Greutman’s (2017), research benefits do prevail.

Maybe you have found yourself drifting during the service - planning a grocery list, checking facebook, closing your eyes, _____ ... I’ll let you fill in the blank. If you have children maybe you’ve experienced the inevitable, “How much longer?!” “I need a drink!” “I need to go to the bathroom!!” While these things may be real needs for kids, often they come from an attention that can no longer be held.

So is a fidget right for you or for your child? While only you can decide that, here are some key things to think about in determining its effectiveness. Fidgets are not toys, but rather tools. If the fidget helps a person stay focused on the greater task at hand - in this case engaging in the worship service - success!! If the fidget becomes more of a distraction than an aide, then maybe it’s not right for you.

Please feel free to borrow any tool from the fidget basket in the back of church and return at the end of the service. While it may be enticing to take several, we ask that you only take one or two so there are plenty to go around.

To read more about the science behind fidgets, check out the article by Heather Greutman (2017) at <https://www.growinghandsonkids.com/do-fidgets-really-work-the-science-behind-fidget-tools.html> .

We hope these help you continue to engage in worshipping our Lord and King!!

- Julie Schalk
On Behalf of the Inclusion Team

Youth Update



Yes, these two are actually planning a retreat. 😊

I have felt in the past year that God has given me the calling to become a youth pastor which I’m very stoked about! Ellie and I tried last year to create a winter retreat but after talking with Sam and Kristi we realized that it was going to be too last minute. So with the help from God, Ellie and I are fully planning out this year’s

fall youth retreat along with some help from Sam and Kristi.

This means that Ellie and I will be leading the lessons, coming up with the worship, and games, along with making sure that we eat good food! We are going to be staying in the Retreat Center at Cran-Hill Ranch in Big Rapids, Michigan on November 22-24.

There, we will be digging deeper into what it looks like to be “Fully Alive” in God. Along with what that can look like in our day to day lives. Not only will we be learning about God, but we will also be having fun and working together as a team. We will be playing some games that people are familiar with and some that people are not. So get ready, get excited, and let’s have a wonderful weekend together Youth Group!

- Abbie Schalk



Mission Stay