

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Relying on God*

**SERIES:** *Core Values*

**SCRIPTURES:** *John 1; John 14:25-26; Matthew 28:16-20; Hebrews 9:26-28*

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**DATE:** *11 - 3 - 2019*

*\*Credit to "Focusing our Faith" (Jay McDermond, Chap. 10) for valuable insights regarding this message!*

Well good morning, it is so great to worship with you.

Welcome to church. Isn't it great to be here? This the place where everyone is accepted, nobody judges you. There are no expectations when you come in Sunday morning. You don't have to prepare before coming to church. There's no pressure on you as you walk in the door.

Welcome to church, and so just to help you relax and feel comfortable, this morning I'd like to begin our service today by giving you all TEST. You will find that test in your bulletin and also on the screen behind me. We have been in this series looking at the 10 Core Values of the BIC church. And so by now you should be able to fill in all of the blanks that you see.

\_\_\_\_\_ **God's love and grace**

**Believing the** \_\_\_\_\_

**Worshipping** \_\_\_\_\_

**Following** \_\_\_\_\_

**Belonging to the** \_\_\_\_\_ **of faith**

\_\_\_\_\_ **to the world**

**Serving** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pursuing** \_\_\_\_\_

**Living** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relying on** \_\_\_\_\_

And no pressure, but if you're looking at the TEST thinking, "I don't remember what the core values are." It likely means, you have been falling asleep during my messages or you have been skipping out on church and God is watching...so no pressure but your eternal destiny is at stake!

Seriously though, just take a moment, see how many of the blanks, key words you are able to fill in on your own.

**AFTER A FEW SECONDS - POPULATE ANSWERS ON SCREEN.**

I want to remind you, this series is based on a book that was written and you can grab your copy of the book out at the Connect Station in the foyer. Just grab one. They actually went very quickly last week and so if you looked for them last week and they were gone, we have replenished and if we run out again, please let me know...send me an email this week and we'll get more copies!

These Core Values reflect God's heart and character, you find them all over your Bible, and they help us to focus on what is most important to us as a church. This morning as we close out our series, we add one final core value.

The 10<sup>th</sup> core value is: **Relying on God.**

Stated this way: **We confess our dependence on God for everything, and seek to deepen our intimacy with him by living prayerfully.**

As we begin it's important to note, the first 9 core values, started with **"We VALUE..."** notice the 10<sup>th</sup> core value starts with **"We CONFESS..."**

And it's because, looking at the first nine core values it's easy to become somewhat overwhelmed. The first 9 exemplify God's heart, and the expectations He has for his followers.

Lives characterized by peaceful relationships. Simple living. Witnessing to our world. Caring compassionately for the needs of others.

Kind of makes you want to give up before you even get started. How could I ever live up to those standards? Perhaps even gives us a sense of hopelessness, despair.

And so the 10<sup>th</sup> core value is ever so important. In the 10<sup>th</sup> core value...

### **I. We confess our dependence on God...**

We acknowledge our inadequacy to meet, to live up to God's standards and expectations, on our own. You will not live up to the core values completely and perfectly. Dependence on God, is acknowledgement of our inadequacy and this happens to be another theme you find all throughout your Bible.

It's kind of fascinating, as you read through your Bible, it becomes quite clear that numbers are significant. For example the number **12**...show up regularly, about 187 times in your Bible and is of particular importance and often carries the sense of completion, wholeness, perfection.

There were 12 tribes of Israel.

12 Gates into the New Jerusalem.

12 disciples of Jesus.

12 is kind of like a number of perfection.

Now turn with me if you would in your Bible to **Matthew 28**. Something really fascinating. Matthew's Gospel ends with a significant passage of Scripture called "The Great Commission." Jesus died, raised back to life, and is now headed back to the Father and he is giving his farewell address to his Disciples.

**<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

Great commission to Jesus disciples. Now here's what's fascinating about this all important commission...how many disciples are standing there, receiving Jesus commission? I'll give you a hint, Judas is not with them and they have not yet added Matthias. Go back to verse 16...

**<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.**

11 disciples. 11 is not an important number in Scripture. Because 11 is not complete, it's not whole, it's imperfect. Kind of makes you want shout, "*Jesus, just wait... you're missing one. There are only 11 disciples. Shouldn't you hold off until they fill Judas' spot? Shouldn't you wait until you have a whole, complete, perfect little group of followers before you go sending them out to make disciples?*"

It's kind of like Jesus is saying, "*Actually, 11 will do. 11 is good enough for me. I never expected, I never intended perfection.*"

In fact Jesus might go on to say, *“Even when there were 12, they were far from perfect.”*

Jesus comes to start a revolution, to change the world, the course of human history. And to do it, time and time again, throughout Scripture, he picks 11’s not 12’s. Then you begin thinking about the other followers of Jesus...motley crew included fisherman, tax collectors, lepers, centurions, Samaritans, even prostitutes.

And that’s why Jesus picks you and me. You see, when it really comes down to it, followers of Jesus are not perfect, whole and complete. We are, all of us, insufficient, broken, weak, and incomplete. We are 11’s not 12’s. We don’t measure up.

And so as a church, as human beings aware of our inadequacy...not defined by it, but aware of it...“We confess our dependence on God for everything...”

And so as we close out the message and as we finish this sermon series, I want to suggest 4 ways that we can practice relying on God.

### **1. Start with Jesus.**

Here’s what I mean by that...one of the primary ways God reaches us and helps us in our inadequacy is by becoming like us.

**John 1 – In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among.**

The foundation of Christianity is this core belief that humans could not reach God on their own and so God became human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth to in order to meet us where we are. God became human.

Have you ever watched an expert do their job?

*There was an engineer who had an exceptional gift for fixing all things mechanical. After serving his company loyally for over 30 years, he happily retired. Many years later the company contacted him regarding a seemingly impossible problem they were having with one of their multimillion dollar machines. They had tried everything and everyone else to get the machine to work but to no avail. In desperation, they called on the retired engineer who had solved so many of their problems in the past. The engineer reluctantly took the challenge. He spent a day studying the huge machine. At the end of the day, he marked a small "x" in chalk on a particular component of the machine and stated, "This is where your problem is." The part was replaced and the machine worked perfectly again. The company received a bill for \$50,000 from the engineer for his service. They demanded an itemized accounting of his charges. The engineer responded briefly: "One chalk mark \$1. Knowing where to put it \$49,999"*

An expert is someone who is fully aware, immersed, engaged with their skill.

God becomes like us in Jesus. Fully aware, fully immersed in humanity. We might say, the expert human. Experiencing the same things that we frail humans experience.

***Born a baby, growing through adolescence. He was tempted, he was thirsty, he cried at the death of his friend Lazarus. And he experienced death himself.*** (McDermond pg. 164)

God becomes like us in order to model for us what our lives are supposed to look like. We depend on God, when we look at the life of Jesus and as we watch, we begin to imitate.

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth... **“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” (1 Corinth. 11:1)**

I would not forgive my enemies but Jesus shows me how.

I would not wash the feet of my neighbors but Jesus shows me how.

I would not submit my tongue to patience and gentleness, but Jesus shows me how.

I would not keep my eyes pure, but Jesus shows me how

I would not give generously but Jesus shows me how.

I would not accept and love the scandalous and the immoral, but Jesus shows me how.

I would not hope in the midst of despair, but through his resurrection, Jesus shows me how.

Dependence on God, means watching Jesus, (the expert human) and then imitating his life with my own.

Second I depend on God, when I...

## **2. Accept Jesus sacrifice for my sin**

And I know that's kind of a "churchy statement."

And so I want to acknowledge, even in saying it, it is mystery to me how this works. It brings up all kinds of questions in my mind.

How does Jesus death on a Roman cross 2,000 years ago impact my selfishness, pride, anger, gluttony and my failure?

What exactly does it mean to accept Jesus sacrifice for my sin?

And though I accept his sacrifice, death and resurrection, as victory over my sin, why do I still fail in many of these areas?

I do not fully know. There is an entire field of theology dedicated to these questions...**Atonement theology or soteriology.**

**Hebrews 9:26-28...he has appeared once for all...to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself...**

**2 Corinthians 5:21 - <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin<sup>[b]</sup> for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

**Romans 7 - <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me...? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

**Ephesians 2:8 - “For by grace you have been saved...this is not from yourself...it is the gift of God.”**

**Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live but Christ lives in me.**

Here is what I know, in my acceptance of Jesus grace-filled sacrifice, the death and resurrection of this Jewish Rabbi, I find strength and freedom. I find hope and transformation...a life that is not completely my own! And for 2,000 years others have experienced this well.

In some ways, I'm trusting the expert of humanity. When he tells me, using language that I cannot fully compute...I'm trusting him.

Remember this core value is “relying on God”...that statement by it's very nature means, there may be things about my life, human nature, spirituality, that I will fail to comprehend. And so the mystery of this concept (accepting Jesus sacrifice as victory over my sin) is itself an act of relying on God. Trusting He knows.

So we start with Jesus as our model, we accept his sacrifice for our sin, third...

### **3. Jesus provides a helper...the Holy Spirit.**

**John 14** – Jesus begins describing the treacherous nature of what is about to happen to him, his arrest and death and eventually his ascension back to the father. It is alarming and disconcerting for his disciples to say the least. Their leader is telling them he is leaving them. They're thinking, *"Wait what? We can't do this on our own! What will we do without you? We would have ignored Zacchaeus in the sycamore tree, we would never have spoken to the Samaritan woman at the well, we can't compete with the religious leaders...we can't do this on our own, we'll mess up the good thing you've got going here Jesus!"* And do you know how Jesus reassures his disciples...<sup>25</sup> **"All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**

Jesus says, I'm sending my Holy Spirit to help you. To remind you, to give you wisdom, to pick you up, to encourage you, to empower you, to fill you with LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL.

Does anyone recognize this man? His name is Eliud Kipchoge (**PIC OF ELIUD ON HIS OWN**). He is Kenyan Marathon runner. Really popular right now, because a few weeks ago, he became the first man to run a marathon (26.2 miles) in under 2 hours. For years, people have wondered if it's humanly possible.

What's most significant though or fascinating, is how he accomplished the feat? For one, they had this digital laser light, in front him, pacing him. He was just trying to keep up with the light.

But more than that, he had a group of runners running with him (**PIC OF ELIUD RUNNING WITH GROUP**). And every 6 miles, the group of runners would change and a fresh new set of runners would join him. These runners were not allowed to physically touch him. Simply run with him, around him. The presence of these

runners, sent specifically as helpers, was enough to “carry him” to this incredible feat. There’s a mystery in this. People are always able to run faster in a group than on their own. Somehow just the presence of these runners with him, carry’s him.

Jesus says, on this marathon journey of following me, imitating me...witnessing to the world, living simply, serving compassionately, I’m sending you my helper. The Holy Spirit. To run with you, around you, in you...to fill you and empower you. To help you do what you could not do on your own.

Fourth and finally...how do you rely on God...you

#### **4. Pray**

And we’ve spent a great deal of time this year, talking about prayer, we spent 5 weeks back in June.

But there is just no greater symbol of our dependence, than the humility of asking for help.

Our son Landon, he loves legos. And so for Christmas/Birthday, he normally gets a lego set. Do you know what I loathe about lego sets? The stickers (**PIC OF LEGO’S & STICKERS**). So many of the tiny little lego pieces need stickers put on them. Have you ever tried to put lego stickers on little tiny lego pieces? It’s torture. And if you don’t get exactly right the first time, you’re done. There’s no fixin’ it. Landon knows this, and so when he needs help he always asks Jenny. Cause she’s able to this kind of thing.

The other day I was home with Landon, Jenny not around. He needs help putting stickers on the legos. I could see his little mind working. Mom’s not around. The only other people in the house are myself and Keagan...Landon’s 5 year old brother. Whose gonna do the stickers. And Landon says, “Hey Keagan, do you think you

could try putting these stickers on for me?” I’m just kidding. But there’s nothing more humbling than your 10 year old son, peering over your shoulder as you give your best shot at lego stickers, Landon says *“Dad I think you’re finally getting the hang of this. One day you might be as good as mom.”*

Prayer is our way of daily asking God to step into our inadequacy, the stickers of life that we just can’t handle.

Richard Foster writes, ***“Prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life. Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers us into the perpetual communion with the Father.”***

***“Real prayer is God’s way of changing us and creating in us a life which is transformed and Christlike...It is in the process of praying that we meet God and open ourselves to the Holy Spirit’s leading us to imitate Jesus Christ.”***

(McDermond pg 168)

The Bible is filled with stories, of imperfect, inadequate people...crying out for help.

Read Daniels story in the Den of lions.

Read about Shadrak, Meshach and Abednago in a fiery furnace.

Read about Jonah and what he was doing for 3 days in the belly of the fish.

Read the entire book of Job...it’s one big conversation with God!

Read about Peter’s attempt at walking on water.

Read about the woman in Matthew 15 falling at Jesus feet asking for healing for her demon-possessed daughter.

Read about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

You cannot do this on your own, and you were never intended. And so ***“We confess our dependence on God for everything, and seek to deepen our intimacy with him by living prayerfully.”***

As we close our time today. I am going to invite Mark & Maggie Roth to come forward.

Many of you know, I was not born in the United States, I lived the first 9 years of my life as missionary kid in Zambia, Africa. And I was born at Macha Hospital in Zambia. The BIC for a long time has had a significant presence at this hospital. And Mark and Maggie who have been a significant part of our church family are headed to serve compassionately and witness to the world at Macha hospital.

They will tell a little more about the journey they are about to begin, a journey they can't complete on their own, and how we as church have an opportunity to support and pray, encourage, and lift up this couple in the days ahead.