

# THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

*"Praising, Proclaiming and Practicing Emmanuel—God with us—in daily life!"*

## Pastor's Keyboard: "Discipleship - "I AM God-Defined!"

Who or what defines you? When was the last time you took a SELFIE and posted it on Facebook? Why is it that people spend so much time self-obsessing and self-defining?

The Old Adam is all about self-preoccupation. Concupiscence, another word for sin, is "the inordinate desire for the lesser good"; it is the self curved in upon the self. You see, the self simply can't get enough of the self. The self wants what it wants. It's all about me being me, as I define me, myself and I.

Tell me about yourself. The invitation is one of self-disclosure. It's a question of Identity. The cultural landscape says that I am who I say I am. I am not who you say I am. You don't really know me. Preoccupation with the self amazes me; even amuses me. We see it in the media, in politics and in the church. A friend talks endlessly about himself. Finally he pauses, take a breath, and says, "I'm tired of talking about me. Why don't you talk about me for a while?"



In today's world of progressive enlightenment, the old categories of male and female apparently no longer suffice. It isn't enough to be created in the image of God, male and female. Now days, gender fluid is preferred. We don't want to be labeled or categorized by society. We want to be self-defined.

*"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

*- Galatians 2:20 -*

When I was in my first parish, rural Minnesota was living through the "farming crisis". I remember sitting with a group of men, 10-15 farmers. I was leading a Bible Study. I led the

men through an exercise. I put the words, "Who am I?" on the blackboard. I proceeded to define myself in terms of my roles. "I am a Packer Fan. I am a son. I am a father. I am a husband. I am a Cobber. I am a pastor." The list was endless. Little by little the identifications got crossed out. My mother and dad died and so I was no longer a son. In the end, all of my self-defining was gone. Only one thing remained on the blackboard: "I am a redeemed child of God." What we discovered that day is that only one thing lasts forever. Not my self-defining, but only God's defining.

Consider St. Paul's self-awareness and self-assessment. In I Cor. 15, Paul says that he is the least of the Apostles, unfit to be an Apostle because he persecuted the church, but by God's grace he is what he is;

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## Food For Thought:

*The Word of God defines me. "The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me."*

*— Martin Luther*

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## Lee Pearce: “The Plan”

“I love it when a plan comes together!” You may remember that as the favorite phrase of COL John ‘Hannibal’ Smith, the leader of the intrepid “A-Team” in the TV series which aired from 1983-1987. The “A-Team” was a group of crack commandos who fought evil as soldiers of fortune.

Listening to the spoken Word during our public reading of the New Testament on Easter Monday, I was struck with that phrase: “I love it when a plan comes together!” I could just imagine that God might be thinking that to himself! *Emmanuel* servants were doing what we have been commanded to do: convey the Good News. We are directed to orally communicate the gospel: “so then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). How are the lost going to know, unless we tell them the story of salvation? We, too, gain a deeper understanding of scripture when we hear it.

I’m always amazed how the Bible amplifies, explains, and reinforces itself again and again, beginning to end. No matter how often we read Scripture, we gain insight from hearing the word; how the pieces fall into place. As Martin Luther declared, “Scripture interprets Scripture.” We don’t know the full impact of someone hearing the Bible read to them, the effect the words have, or the implanting power of the Holy Spirit. But God knows. We do clearly know that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Jeremiah dictated his prophecies from God to his devoted friend & faithful servant Baruch who read the words of the Lord to the people and also before King Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36). The godless King was angered & had Baruch arrested and the scroll burned. Did it all end there? Of course not! Jeremiah again dictated God’s words to his scribe who again orally proclaimed it! God has preserved His word throughout the centuries, clearly demonstrating the imperative that we read and share the Scriptures.

Not everyone wants to hear God’s word, just as King Jehoiakim didn’t want to hear it. Some violently oppose it, some get uncomfortable even hearing it

mentioned, and some just don’t care. But that doesn’t absolve us of our responsibility to proclaim the inerrant word of God. We may not always see the ‘big picture’ or understand the aggression against the church, the persecution of Christians, or the apostasy in the church and in the world today. We must fight the defection from the truth and the false teachers, with God’s word. God will handle the end result, but we must do our work in His plan. We have His promise, “so shall my word be that goes out of my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). This is a plan coming together!

So where do we fit into ‘the plan’? *Emmanuel* servants share in the plan when we “**Praise, Proclaim and Practice Emmanuel – God with us – in daily life!**” “For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11); Proclaiming the Word, Praising the Author, and Practicing His commands! Now that’s a plan coming together!

## Women’s Afternoon Bible Study

The Ladies Afternoon Bible Study reconvened on March 30 at Oasis Church. Currently the women are engaged in an eight week study on inspiring women of the New Testament. We meet at Oasis Church on Wednesdays at 1pm. Remaining Class dates & Women of the Word are:

April 27 - Martha & Mary (*at St. James Coffee*)

May 11 - Mary Magdalene

May 25 - Outcasts & Untouchables

June 8 - Dorcas & Lydia (*note change of date*)

June 15 - Phoebe, Priscilla & Philip’s Daughters

June 29 - Lois & Eunice

## Marks of Discipleship

Signposts guide our way—Disciples seek to pray daily, worship weekly, grow spiritually, read & study Scripture on a regular basis, serve others, share the good news, & give generously.

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& God's grace to, through, and in him, was not in vail. Paul says that the Resurrected Christ appeared also to him, last of all, as to one untimely born. Paul says that he worked harder than all of the other Apostles, though it was not him, but God's grace in him. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul cites his impressive credentials. When Paul does a self-evaluation of his portfolio, he says that it is all *skubala*, a Greek word for excrement.

Paul isn't concerned about self-advancement or self-preoccupation or self-promotion, or self-definition. Why? Because God has revealed a profound truth to Paul. In Galatians 2:20, Paul says, emphatically for emphasis, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." In Christ, Paul has discovered the inescapable truth: I am dead and alive in Christ. Checkmate. Game Over! God wins.

Paul says, "For as many as you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is no longer male and female, Jew or Greek, slave or free. We are all one. Sons and Daughters of Abraham, heirs according to promise." Everyone wants to put a label on us. The world wants to categorize and define us. We think that self-defining is the better answer. But the real and only answer is God-defining. Apart from Christ, who am I? I am dead. I am lost. I am a sinner. I am captive and I cannot free myself. I am self-centered, self-advancing, self-righteous, and self-serving. "I can will the good, but I cannot do it. Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver and free me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is assumed that we will be free indeed, if we can simply escape the intrusive defining by others. Self-defining is supposed to liberate us, but it simply replaces one oppressor with another. God has a better solution. Our Creator is in the defining business. God tells us who we are in Christ, and who we are apart from Christ. Can the pot say to the potter, "I am who I say I am?" Remember who & whose you are: Clay in the hands of a Potter God. In Christ, who is the firstborn of the dead & the first fruits of those who fall asleep, we are united in a death like his & a resurrection like his. Jesus says, "You are mine, forever, and for always."

"Who does God say that I am, and you are?" In Christ, we are a new creation. In Christ, we are alive. In Christ, we are found. In Christ, we are justified, sanctified & glorified. In Christ, we are saved by grace alone! St. John says, "Beloved, we are God's children NOW. When Christ appears we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." Only God has the right to tell us who we are. We are defined ... by Christ alone!

— *I AM God-Defined ... and so are you, Pastor Dave*

## WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR MAY

### **Saturday, May 7 - Easter VII (6pm)**

Scripture Reader & Prayers & Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce

Ushers: Darald & Leitha Bothun

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Treats: Judy Pearce

### **Saturday, May 14 - Pentecost 6pm)**

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Larry Vomhof

Ushers: Jim & Addison Siebenaler

Acolyte: Cabe Siebenaler

Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson

Treats: Samia Nelson

### **Saturday, May 21 - Holy Trinity (6pm)**

Scripture Reader & Prayers & Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr

Ushers: Matt & Nora Serr

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Treats: Jenna Serr

### **Saturday, May 28 - Pentecost II: (6pm)**

Scripture Reader, Prayers, and Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson

Ushers: Rich Sunde & LeRoy Quam

Acolyte: Elijah Matzke

Treats: Leitha Bothun

**NOTE:** Pastor Dave will be our worship leader & preacher each week. MarJean Damerval will be our pianist each week. Julie Steffenson will take care of set up & Janet Sunde & friends will take care of the take down each week. Peg Holtan will provide the coffee & Don Holtan will be our sound technician each week.

## Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

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### SAVE THE DATE!

### MEN'S BANQUET!

*The Women of Emmanuel are hosting a Banquet for the men and boys of our Congregation.*

*Friday, November 4*

## NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Wake Up America! - Thursday, May 5. Evening Prayer Service at 7:00 p.m. Faith Expo featuring ministry booths from 6:30-7:00 p.m. and 8:15-9:15 p.m. Location: Rochester Assembly of God Church (4240 - 18th Avenue N.W.). Put on the whole armor of God ... AND PRAY! Prayer Walk--Sunday, May 1, beginning at 3pm - at the 2nd Street entrance of St. Mary's Hospital! Gather at 2:45pm. A Live Concert (Josh Edwards) will follow at 4pm on the Peace Plaza.

## PRAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS

Each month, on the 15th day of the month, we pray for an area school. During the month of May we are praying for Lincoln K-8 School and delivering goodies as an expression of our love & gratitude. Thanks for keeping students & their families, teachers and administrators, in your prayers! This ministry is supported by an Action Team gift from Thrivent.

## SATURDAY SCHOOL

We are coming to the end of a great year of Saturday School. We have enjoyed Bible lessons, games, crafts, dramas and snacks. Our last day of Saturday School will be Saturday, May 21st. Come & celebrate with us before the summer break. Thank you to parents, grandparents & others for helping to make this a wonderful time of learning for our kids! Special thanks to our wonderful teacher, Julie Steffenson.

## Back Page Stories

### Men's Bible Study Breakfast:

Weekly fellowship around God's Word at 8am Tuesdays at Charlie's (1408 2nd. St. SW). Join us in being Evangelical. Invite a friend.

**Supermarket Saturday:** The next Channel One opportunity is May 21, 2016 (9 am—Noon).

**Women's Bible Studies:** The Afternoon Study Group is currently studying "Fascinating Women of the New Testament" - meeting twice each month on Wednesdays at 1pm. The Evening Study Group is studying Women of the Old Testament. They continue to meet monthly at the home of Katie Siebenaler. Session Seven (Rahab & Ruth: Foreigners in the Family Tree) will be on Tuesday,

May 17 at 6:30pm.

### Council Highlights (April 13):

Pastor Dave noted that an article on our Public Reading of the New Testament has been written and submitted to both the NALC & the Iowa Mission District for publication. Financial update: YTD loss of \$7,006. First Quarter Giving Statements are being distributed. Offering envelopes are being ordered for adults and children. Our Emmanuel Church Picnic will be held on Sunday, August 7 at the Vomhof's. Oasis is hosting a potluck picnic for members of Oasis, Emmanuel, & Iglessia churches on Saturday, August 27. Next council meeting is Wednesday, June 1 at 5pm. An Emmanuel Huddle will be held on Sat, April 30 following Worship!

### Madonna Towers Ministry:

Pastor Dave is leading worship & preaching at the Madonna Towers Skilled Care Chapel on the first Wednesday of each month. Members of Emmanuel are invited to participate in this ministry to seniors of our community. Our next Service will be on Wednesday, May 4 at 1:30pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to participate in this wonderful ministry.

**Electronic Giving:** Members wishing to contribute to Emmanuel Lutheran with automated giving may do so by contacting Judy Caudill or Deb Vomhof. Offerings are transferred

*Pastor Dave is taking Monday as his weekly day off. Please call for emergencies only. Thanks for your partnership in ministry!*