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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA
JANUARY 6, 2008
PASTORS MARK & WENDA FRY

1 PASTOR MARK FRY: It's great to be back with you in
2 the new year. What a great Christmas holiday. Fantastic.

3 This is unusual this year for a lot of reasons, but
4 thankfully the Iowa caucus is over is one reason it's
5 unusual.

6 Being from Iowa it has been fun for me to follow
7 that in my hometown newspaper. It has been fantastic.

8 It's a little town of five thousand people, Hillary
9 Clinton is there, she's got all these new friends, it's just
10 fantastic.

11 But it's interesting, this year the calendar does
12 something that it doesn't do very often, and that is you are
13 probably familiar with the old twelve days of Christmas song.

14 January 6th is the 12th day of Christmas, and so the
15 tradition of Christmas is we celebrate it for twelve days.

16 And then on that 12th day we celebrate Epiphany,
17 which is the star over the home of Jesus and Mary and Joseph,
18 and so it's very rare that Epiphany, January 6th, actually
19 happens on a Sunday.

20 So it's kind of a cool thing that it happens this
21 year and so what we are going to be looking at is we are
22 going to be looking at that Epiphany story from Matthew's
23 gospel.

24 So I would love for you to grab one of the Bibles
25 that are out in the pew.

1 At the end of the message today we are going to
2 challenge you in this new year to bring your own Bible.

3 And if you don't have one, we are going to help you
4 get one, but we really want to become a church, and I think
5 we always have been a church that has taken the scriptures
6 seriously.

7 But we want to take it on the road and home with us
8 and really I think God smiles when he hears us rustling the
9 pages of that book, whether it be in this room or in our
10 rooms at home.

11 So that's going to be our focus today, is really on
12 that life of devotion and God's word coming alive to us.

13 So we are going to look at that story from Matthew
14 2, and it's in the New Testament, Matthew 2.

15 If you were around over the Christmas holidays you
16 may have heard the story of Jesus's birth, which is in
17 Matthew 1, about Verses 18 through the end of that chapter,
18 and our text begins with Chapter 2, Verse 1.

19 "In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in
20 Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem
21 asking where is the child who has been born king of the Jews,
22 for we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay
23 him homage.

24 "When King Herod heard this he was frightened and
25 all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief

1 priests and scribes of the people he inquired of them where
2 the Messiah was to be born.

3 "They told him in Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has
4 been written by the prophet:

5 "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no
6 means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall
7 come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.

8 "Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and he
9 learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.

10 "Then he sent them to Bethlehem saying go and search
11 diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring
12 me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.

13 "When they had heard the king, they set out, and
14 there ahead of them went the star that they had seen at its
15 rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was.

16 "When they saw that the star had stopped, they were
17 overwhelmed with joy.

18 "On entering the house, they saw the child with
19 Mary, his mother.

20 "They knelt down and paid him homage. Opening their
21 treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold,
22 frankincense, and myrrh.

23 "And having been warned in a dream not to return to
24 Herod, they left for their own country by another road."

25 This is the gospel of our Lord.

1 This is the way our living room looks at home and
2 what you'll see over here is my devotional chair, and you
3 will see over here Pastor Wenda's devotional chair and we are
4 going to practically hopefully show how we do that.

5 But it's interesting, we have some tools and some
6 routines we want to share with you.

7 It's interesting, the Bible that I use at home is
8 different than the one I keep at the church, but I have been
9 using this one more and more in my own study and then in my
10 own preaching, oddly enough, and if you are like me, you
11 maybe weren't raised in the Christian tradition.

12 And I was given a Bible, I still have it, I think I
13 was like 12, and I never opened it. It was really hard.
14 Brutal.

15 I got this from Pastor Phillips, he was this
16 Methodist guy and my mom sang in the choir there, so I got
17 this Bible and we would go a couple of times a year.

18 When I would go I would go and gamble in the Sunday
19 school class flipping quarters with all my classmates.

20 And I didn't really ever learn a whole lot, but on
21 Christmas Eve we would go, and then again on Easter and
22 stuff.

23 I had this Bible, but I never used it, and when I
24 met Wenda we started to date and one of the things she asked
25 me is are you a Christian?

1 And I lied and said sure. You know, I figured it
2 might lead somewhere. And it did. It did.

3 (Laughter)

4 But it was really important to her, and I said it
5 was important to me, and it wasn't that it wasn't important,
6 but you wouldn't have known by the way that I was.

7 So we started dating for a while. I think it was
8 the first Christmas we were together her folks gave me a
9 Bible.

10 It was an amplified Bible. I thought this is cool.
11 It was easier to read and it had my name on it. I thought
12 this is really cool.

13 I started using that a little bit and life unfolded
14 and we fell further and further in love and got married and
15 went to Australia.

16 Wenda has a tradition she will tell you about in a
17 while of doing devotions.

18 She has always done them and I've not always done
19 them.

20 And so when we were first married, you know, again,
21 I'll go along, the guy that I am, I'm not going to lead, I'm
22 just going to follow.

23 So we started doing devotions. We were living in
24 Australia.

25 We were on an extended honeymoon. I'm over there

1 playing basketball and she thought it would be a good idea
2 for us to do the tradition, get up early in the morning, and
3 so she set the alarm clock or whatever and she would do hers
4 at like 3:30 in the morning.

5 And then she would wake me up and I would go in the
6 bathroom, that was the warmest room in the house, at 4:00.

7 And I would go in there and it was a battle to stay
8 awake.

9 So what I started to do is I started to hide cookies
10 in the bathroom.

11 (Laughter)

12 And in Australia you buy a whole box of Bickies,
13 they call them, they are these biscuits, and I would hide
14 them in the bathroom and I would hide them in the bathroom
15 and eat this whole stack of cookies.

16 And I would go back to bed, "How was your devotion?"

17 "Oh, it was great. I really was fed today," kind of
18 a thing.

19 (Laughter)

20 But it's interesting, we will do some things just to
21 go through the motions.

22 But one of the things that is interesting is these
23 different Bibles.

24 As I have gotten a little longer in the tooth and
25 more experienced, it is interesting to read the different

1 translations of these verses.

2 I hope you noticed that one that was just kind of
3 like, gee, I never saw that word, where it said they were
4 going to go pay him homage.

5 Do you see that? It's in Verse 2 and then it's in
6 Verse 8 and in Verse 11.

7 And Lowell and I in the office have got kind of a
8 well meaning little jab back and forth that he's an NRSV guy
9 and I'm a new convert to the NIV Bible.

10 And most Bibles call it they had come to worship
11 him, instead of to pay him homage.

12 And I was troubled by that, I'm a little anal, and
13 so I looked up to pay him homage.

14 I got Wikipedia, that's not real reliable, but I
15 looked at that.

16 And I looked at some theological books, what is the
17 deal with pay him homage.

18 Well, it's an old military term, and it's an old
19 political term that has to do with vassals under the subject
20 of their, you might just say a kingdom thing about their
21 political affiliation, and so to pay him homage is to be
22 under his sway.

23 Under his dominion, under his rule, under his
24 umbrella you might say, to pay him homage, to be in that
25 position of respect.

1 And I like much better they were there to worship
2 him, but I think maybe God in his infinite wisdom in this
3 newer translation of the Bible is teaching us a couple
4 different things.

5 He's teaching me it's very important to worship him,
6 to pay him homage.

7 But it's also very important to be under his
8 influence and in his proximity.

9 Under his sway, under his umbrella, to marinate in
10 his presence.

11 And it's interesting, because to pay tribute to, and
12 what we see in the wise men is not only do they pay tribute
13 to him, they fall down and they worship him.

14 And as they do so they have been drawn by this light
15 that has beckoned them and as they arrive they bring gifts to
16 give to this child and they kneel and they worship him and
17 they respond with something that is very generous.

18 So all of that is in that pay homage to, but it's a
19 little bit of both, and worship, because you see Herod isn't
20 Jewish, and what he's saying is I would like to pay him
21 homage, too.

22 What he wants to do is have him destroyed, because
23 he was a threat to his influence, his sway, his dominion, his
24 umbrella.

25 He knew that this new child would infringe on his

1 territory and his rule.

2 So to pay him homage, it's kind of a political term,
3 but it's also a very, very important relational theological
4 term.

5 The light draws us and we lift up our hands, we bow
6 down to the child king.

7 Some people get a little nervous when people move
8 too much, but it's all over the scriptures.

9 We respond. We bow down and worship you now, is
10 what the song says.

11 It's ironic, isn't it, we'll sing these things but
12 we don't do them.

13 It speaks of proper positioning and proper priority.
14 In other words, you are the king, and I'm not, and I want to
15 be under your sway.

16 It's the first commandment. You shall have no other
17 Gods, no other kings, none.

18 Bow down and worship him. Pay him homage. Not just
19 once a week, but often when the light calls you, before the
20 light is out, pay him homage.

21 So we want to marinate in that a little bit. I want
22 to look at an Old Testament reference. Look at Psalm 72.

23 We were doing the 7:45 service together, Wenda and
24 I, and it was fun because we sang "We Three Kings of Orient
25 Are", you may remember it, bearing gifts we traversed afar,

1 westward leading still proceeding.

2 She goes, I thought they were going east. What is
3 with the westward leading?

4 And we did this Psalm together, it kind of explains
5 it, but it's really kind of a complex thing.

6 Because what we see in Psalm 72, what you'll notice
7 in this is at about Verse 10.

8 "May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render
9 him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts, may
10 all kings fall down before him, all nations give him
11 service."

12 And it continues and there is a reference as well a
13 little bit further in Verse 14.

14 "From oppression and violence he will redeem their
15 lives, precious is their blood in his sight."

16 Verse 15, "Long may he live. May gold of Sheba be
17 given to him. May prayer be made for him continually and
18 blessings invoked for him all day long."

19 You see what we see in this is there are different
20 geographical locations that the kings were prophesied to come
21 from, and they are coming from the east, and so Matthew says
22 the wise men from the east.

23 We saw the star at its rising. Stars and the sun
24 rise in the east.

25 So westward leading is kind of an interesting thing,

1 isn't it?

2 Because geographically, yes, they are kind of going
3 west, because they were from the east, but stars move around
4 a little bit, rotate.

5 But there are some theologians who said that
6 Americans got ahold of that hymn and made it even more
7 prominent because we had this progress west thing going on.
8 Isn't that interesting? Kind of cool.

9 But the point is, they are going to the light; not
10 away from it.

11 Westward leading, still proceeding. We are not
12 regressing; we are proceeding. Draw us to the light.

13 And it's an Old Testament prophecy, and that's the
14 tradition, we have three gifts, we don't really know if there
15 were three kings, but it looks good around the nativity
16 scene, doesn't it? Gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

17 Maybe they all brought separate gifts. We don't
18 know. There may have been more than that. There may have
19 been two of them.

20 Maybe one guy brought three. Maybe they had
21 somebody that forgot to re-gift, but we don't know.

22 But, you see, the Old Testament ties into the New
23 Testament.

24 They are coming from Sheba and Seba, Tarshish, and
25 they will give him gold for a king, and incense and myrrh.

1 It's a beautiful thing.

2 There is this other wonderful thing that I want to
3 point out to you from the Book of Numbers.

4 Numbers is one of those first five books of the
5 Bible. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

6 Page 126 in my Bible, from Numbers 6, beginning at
7 Verse 24, and if you have been raised around the Christian
8 tradition, bless you. I wasn't, as I say as a kid, and I
9 love it now.

10 But a lot of times at the end of a worship service
11 you'll hear these words pronounced from Numbers 6.

12 It's called the priestly benediction. It was spoken
13 by the representatives of God, and they would say these
14 verses, Verses 24, 25, 26.

15 "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his
16 face shine upon you and be gracious to you, and the Lord lift
17 up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

18 And maybe you would have seen somebody make the sign
19 of the cross. In the name of the Father and Son and Holy
20 Spirit.

21 But, you see, the expectation of the Jewish
22 community, and also the Christian community, is when that
23 light is pronounced, notice how it's phrased.

24 "May the Lord make his face to shine on you." It's a
25 reference to light.

1 "May he lift up his countenance upon you and give
2 you peace."

3 But the expectation is, if it's pronounced, then
4 you'll go and radiate it. It isn't just thanks very much,
5 pastor.

6 It's "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make
7 his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, and the Lord
8 lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

9 The expectation of radiance is that it won't stop,
10 it will keep radiating.

11 And so when the pastoral blessing of that is given,
12 then that, you see, is the light.

13 The light is handed on, you see, this little light
14 of mine, I'm going to let it shine.

15 There was a beautiful funeral we had last week for a
16 young girl in our community killed in a car wreck and they
17 sang that wonderful song.

18 That's the promise, you see, is that you come to the
19 stable, you worship the child and bow down to him and then
20 something happens in that that you get filled and you go out
21 and pass it on. Radiate.

22 That was the expectation in the Jewish community and
23 that's the expectation in the Christian community now. It's
24 giving and receiving and radiating.

25 It's interesting, isn't it? They go with gifts and

1 then they go from there changed.

2 It's giving and receiving, but I think a lot of us
3 just think it's receiving.

4 Well, he said it to me, so I'm just going to keep it
5 inside. No. There is a response called for.

6 It's pronounced, the light, countenance is lifted
7 upon us, and we respond to that.

8 We kneel, but we also radiate. It's giving and
9 receiving and radiating.

10 And like Lowell said in a great message a few weeks
11 ago, it's who we are.

12 We're like flashlights that go back to get
13 recharged, batteries that go to get recharged.

14 So I wanted to just expound on that passage and I
15 want to set Wenda up.

16 Wenda, you can go up and take your position. Let me
17 just set the stage.

18 This is Wenda. She is our pastor of worship and
19 spiritual life and she has been kind of a pastor to me for a
20 long time, too, because she kind of dragged me along kicking
21 and screaming into the whole Christian experience, you might
22 say.

23 In a different way I had it before her, but she was
24 an instrumental part of it.

25 But what you have before you is my devotional chair

1 and her devotional chair and never the two shall meet.

2 I get up early, 6:00, 6:30, whatever, and I do my
3 thing and then I leave and she gets up and does her thing
4 after that. So maybe that's a setup enough.

5 PASTOR WENDA FRY: Thanks, Mark. I knew you were a
6 cookie monster, but I had no idea until today that he was
7 hiding those cookies in the bathroom in Australia.

8 That's amazing, Mark, and then where did you get
9 that 3:30 in the morning over there?

10 PASTOR MARK FRY: I thought that's when we were
11 doing it. It felt like 3:30.

12 (LAUGHTER)

13 PASTOR WENDA FRY: Exactly. Definitely for me.
14 Thanks for letting me share about this.

15 Mark asked me to just show you what I do each and
16 every morning.

17 Sunday morning is the only morning I get up in the
18 dark, because I do rise at 8:30, 9:00, every day and start my
19 day right about there.

20 But Sunday is different for me than the rest of the
21 week, because it is dark.

22 So I have an iPod that I use. There is a song on my
23 iPod by a woman named Kathy Sherman and I have her album on
24 there, but it's called "In the Darkness" and so I start with
25 that every Sunday morning.

1 Otherwise on weekdays I just ask the Lord for a
2 song, and just whatever I think of, I go to it in my iPod and
3 I start with that.

4 But the song I use on Sunday mornings, it starts out
5 like in a minor key and it says "In the darkness I come
6 before you, fearful and longing to trust, not remembering who
7 you are to me, I beg you, teach me once again."

8 And so then it kind of goes into a French horn and
9 gets into a major key and then the refrain is "In the morning
10 I come to you, in the morning I call on your name, in the
11 morning I know you are near, your presence in my life dispels
12 all fear."

13 So every Sunday morning I listen to that first and
14 then there is this little instrumental part in there and when
15 that instrumental part is going on I just say hi to the Lord.

16 I just say good morning. Teach me today what you
17 want me to learn, because I am fearful and I'm longing to
18 trust one more time, so just speak to me.

19 So then I just go to my main tool. This is just a
20 toolbox, disciples.

21 This is the Bible my parents gave me when I was
22 confirmed, my amplified Bible.

23 I have a green hymnal in there because sometimes I
24 like to break out into song, and I can because Mark is
25 already gone, that works out great.

1 I have some old stuff that I have had since college,
2 free verse stuff, people that are really inspired by God.

3 I have my study Bible in there, and this is my
4 newest Bible.

5 Mark gave me this for Christmas. It's the Message
6 Bible remixed.

7 And I've decided that I am going to use this year
8 and not write in it.

9 I have all other kinds of Bibles I can write in and
10 have been doing that for years, but I'm not going to write in
11 this one, I've decided.

12 So I start out, and this is my main tool, it's
13 called the Moravian Daily Text, and I hadn't had it for a
14 while.

15 I didn't get it until yesterday because we have been
16 on Christmas break.

17 So I had not read the first prayer for January 1st,
18 so I did that first.

19 "Precious Lord, grant us this new year a greater
20 mindfulness of your presence. Having seen the light, may we
21 resolve together to walk in it."

22 I thought that's cool, because the first thing I did
23 when I got up was I shut the window, we sleep with the window
24 open, plenty of air, Mark has an extra blanket, I'm from
25 Montana, I have to have a lot of air.

1 I shut the window, I looked out east, saw two
2 planets, reminded me of the great light.

3 I thought that's cool. Thank you, Lord. I just
4 talked to him like that.

5 I stumble out to get my coffee, sit down in the
6 chair, and then I went to the January 6th day in here.

7 Now, disciples, there's all kinds of stuff on this
8 page.

9 There's all kinds of readings, but I just wait until
10 something sticks.

11 So I'm looking, trying to wake up, sipping my
12 coffee, and I see, "Arise, shine, for your light has come and
13 the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." Isaiah 60.

14 So I go to Isaiah 60 and I read it in here, but I
15 didn't really feel like reading further, so I thought that
16 must not be it for me today.

17 So then I looked down and I decided to read
18 Matthew 2.

19 I knew Mark was preaching on that and that I was
20 going to be here.

21 So I thought I probably want to use my devotional
22 time for your people, too. Normally it's private, but so I
23 said okay.

24 So I went to that and I started reading Matthew 2
25 and I couldn't stop. I just kept going.

1 All of a sudden I looked at my watch. It was 7:04
2 and I was supposed to be at the 7:45 service, and I thought
3 Mark is going to think I slept late.

4 I hadn't even showered yet. I knew he was going to
5 think I slept in or something.

6 So I hurry, get going, get in the shower and get up
7 here.

8 But the reason that I was later than I had hoped is
9 because I couldn't stop reading.

10 And I was into Matthew 3 about John the Baptist, and
11 this is the part that I know that God wants me to share with
12 you today.

13 "John the Baptist says I am baptizing you here in
14 the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. The
15 real action comes next. The main character in this drama.
16 Compared to him I'm a mere stagehand, but he will ignite the
17 kingdom life with you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit
18 within you, changing you from the inside out.

19 "He's going to clean house, make a clean sweep of
20 your life, he'll place everything true in its proper place
21 before God.

22 Everything false he will put out with the trash to
23 be burned."

24 So I just sat there for a while and then I thought
25 that's what you want me to tell the people, isn't it?

1 Because we all just finished cleaning up from
2 Christmas, didn't we?

3 One of the things we do at first is to separate the
4 gifts from all the wrappings and the paper and the ribbons
5 and the trimming. We do that and then we take the trash out.

6 Mark and I really want you to use this time in
7 worship as a time of practice.

8 We want you to bring a Bible. One that you could
9 write in.

10 I guess if you want the one that is in front of you
11 in the pew and you want to start writing in it, I guess that
12 would be okay, too.

13 But we want you to bring one, because this is where
14 you practice so that you can do it at home.

15 And if we are reading God's word, then we are going
16 to know throughout the year how to separate the trash in our
17 life from the gifts that God has given us.

18 And the best way to do that is to stay reading the
19 word, but you have to find a Bible that is fun to read, that
20 all of a sudden you realize, whoops, I'm almost late for
21 church, or I'm almost late for work, because you are so
22 excited about reading it.

23 PASTOR MARK FRY: I guess what I really want you to
24 know, we don't do it the same way.

25 I have a different set of tools that I use from what

1 Wenda uses.

2 We have some that are similar and some that are
3 different.

4 And the January 6th, which is today of course, "My
5 Utmost for His Highest" and I put this on the screen.

6 This is what we look for, is those confirmations
7 that things are where we need to be.

8 We are going to talk about worship today, homage and
9 all that, just look at this.

10 "Worship is giving the God the best that he has
11 given us. Take time to mediate before God and offer a
12 blessing back to him in a deliberate act of worship."

13 And that doesn't mean at church; it means every day.
14 It might be the first thing in the morning. That works best
15 for us.

16 I hear a lot of people say they do it at dinner time
17 over the table. Bless you if you can do that.

18 We can't. We have to make it first thing we do, and
19 part of our operating system for that is that's the way Jesus
20 did it.

21 He got up early in the morning and went and talked
22 to God. We see it constantly in the scriptures.

23 But then if you hoard it, or keep it for yourself,
24 it will turn into spiritual dry rot.

25 "It's a discipline that must be developed. It will

1 not happen overnight."

2 And, again, we have got so many New Years
3 resolutions, to do things differently, don't we?

4 I'm that same way. I'm going do this this year.
5 I'm going to quit leaving stuff on the floor, whatever.

6 I was reading some deal on the treadmill yesterday,
7 fifty ways to improve your life, U.S. News & World Report.

8 And I'm doing one of those. I bought a Nalgene
9 water bottle instead of the throw-away. I at least got one
10 out of fifty. That's pretty horrible odds.

11 PASTOR WENDA FRY: Mark, I like that comment about
12 that it doesn't happen, I didn't hear that at 7:45, it
13 doesn't happen overnight.

14 I don't want you to think at all that I have not
15 struggled with this routine in my life.

16 When I was 15 my parents gave me -- I have told you
17 this before -- they gave me this Bible and an alarm clock and
18 a pen and a notebook.

19 And I begged my family of six to have the last entry
20 in the morning, because mom and dad would get up at 4:00,
21 4:30, it was a thirty minute deal, 5:00, 5:30, my sisters,
22 6:00, give me 6:30, please, the last one.

23 When I got to college, do you think I did that? No
24 way. That was the last thing I was going to do.

25 I was going to rebel against that, because that's

1 what my family does. I don't do that, and it took me a while
2 to come back to that. I missed it. I really missed doing
3 it.

4 PASTOR MARK FRY: I guess this is a confession as a
5 man. I used to just think it was about getting done with it.
6 It was kind of like getting to the end.

7 You can kind of get up and, I'll read this, speed
8 read through a chapter of the Bible and then feel ready good
9 about yourself.

10 But that's what I like about this, too, that it must
11 developed, it doesn't happen overnight, and I got to doing
12 that and I got a little bit self-righteous about that.

13 I love people that read the Bible in a year and
14 things like that.

15 I've a read the Bible through a few times, but
16 that's one of the things, I think we tend to hit the
17 accelerator so much that we are missing the cool rest stops.

18 When we were in Europe one time, we took a group of
19 people over.

20 Wenda was driving one rental car and I'm driving the
21 other one and I was just praying.

22 We were coming from the Czech Republic up to Munich,
23 and I knew it was a long day in the car, and we were going
24 along and I keep seeing these signs on the side of the road
25 for Wien, which is German for Vienna.

1 to church.

2 But we want to support you in that. We want to make
3 it part of the culture.

4 We want to give you tools we will refer to you, this
5 is maybe a helpful devotional, this might be a helpful
6 translation of the Bible, we want you to come into some
7 classes.

8 We won't assume prior knowledge, we won't expect you
9 to do all kinds of articulation of what you are learning.

10 But, see, the challenge without support would be you
11 just feel horrible and you would fail again.

12 We want to challenge you and support you, because I
13 know you'll feel empowered if you do that.

14 You will get up in the morning, and what Wenda and I
15 do is I do mine earlier and then I will go and do my thing
16 and she will do hers and then we'll talk about it during the
17 day.

18 What did God say to you today? And it's amazing the
19 things that come together.

20 PASTOR WENDA FRY: Mark, I wrote something down you
21 said earlier. I loved that.

22 You said that worshipping or paying homage to God is
23 being under his sway.

24 And I think one of the ways that the enemy really
25 works double time is when we think about reading the Bible.

1 And the enemy likes to talk us out of that. You are
2 not going to understand that, so don't bother.

3 And these kind of voices come in and that's why it's
4 so important for you to get a Bible translation that is
5 readable to you.

6 And Eugene Peterson, the reason he wrote that Bible
7 is because he wanted to put it into the hands of, like Martin
8 Luther, the hands of the ordinary person that works and plays
9 and stresses out and loves and forgives and lives.

10 And he says in the introduction to the Message
11 Bible, he said it's not about reading the Bible; it's about
12 living the Bible.

13 So we want to encourage you, strongly challenge you,
14 to get a Bible you can read and bring it with you.

15 The Study Bible is an excellent one, because it has
16 a lot of scholarly advice in it, but it maybe doesn't read as
17 easily as an NIV translation, or the Message Bible, or maybe
18 even a New Century Bible.

19 So there is no bad version. We just want you to get
20 one and have it and read it.

21 So we have talked about this and I think by way of
22 response today we will play some music and if you were
23 stirred by something that was said today, or God brought you
24 to a different place and you think I'm going to start doing
25 that, I want to repent and turn around and go the other way,

1 or I need some help, I need some strength in reading my
2 Bible, we ask you to come forward and Mark and I will pray
3 for you.

4 And we know that sometimes it just takes a little
5 extra effort to respond to God's word, so that's why we have
6 you move.

7 And some of you have been here before and you have
8 moved to different questions, sometimes people aren't
9 necessarily stirred by it, but we do want to be a people that
10 are found praying and living the Bible.

11 So if we can help you today get started on that
12 journey in the new year by coming forward and praying, Mark
13 and I will pray for you.

14 So come forward, those of you who were stirred to
15 strengthen your devotional life.

16 Lord, we are so thankful for your Holy Spirit,
17 because in your holy word you teach us that your spirit
18 ignites within.

19 Thank you for these disciples that have come
20 forward.

21 Thank you for those that have remained seated and
22 are still stirring within about their life in you, their
23 desire to live the Bible instead of reading it.

24 So we thank you for what you're doing among us in
25 this place and time.

1 We want to be a people that's not just well read,
2 but people who know the great book of heaven so that when the
3 gifts come, and your voice is heard, we can claim that and
4 take the rest of the trash out to the curbside.

5 We know that's what you want us to do. You want us
6 to draw close to you and near to you each and every day.

7 Fill our hearts as your people here at Bethany with
8 your igniting spirit so that we can be the people that please
9 you in worship, paying homage to you each and every day of
10 our life, bowing down and bursting forth with praise and
11 worship.

12 Lord, we know every day is not going to be a great
13 display of fireworks of your power in our life, or we might
14 not even hear your voice, but if we stay with it, Lord, we
15 are going to hear it more consistently. We know that you
16 want that for us, so thank you.

17 Bless us now as we part ways and give us your peace
18 and your joy in our step, through Christ, and all of God's
19 disciples said amen.

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