



CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

3950 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546 • 616.949.5690

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You asked for it! ... continued

Early this summer, as Pastor Manuel foresaw the end of his preaching series on the Book of Isaiah, our pastor invited the congregation to make requests for sermon topics for a season, stepping away for a while from focusing his sermons on one Bible Book at a time.

Several CrossWay fellowshippers came forward with suggestions, and our pastor is continuing with his autumn 2022 schedule based on those promptings.

This month's topical offerings are listed here (at right) for your information and heart preparation. Following this series, which ends next month, Pastor Manuel will be guiding us through Advent, as we look forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord, coming soon!

Heaven rules!

On Saturday, Sept. 24, Becky Alves graciously opened her home for a special livestream event: the True Woman conference presented by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth's ministry *Revive Our Hearts*. The event takes place each year in Indianapolis, and CrossWay women have participated in recent years via livestream right here in Grand Rapids.



Our ladies sat in on a morning of Gospel presentations that focused on the absolute sovereignty of our Lord even in troubled times in our personal lives and in the world around us. Thanks to our women's ministry team for organizing and offering this heart-reviving event, whose theme was "Heaven Rules!"

Special — Oct. 2

Plan to stay for a special Sunday School hour Oct. 2 when CrossWay Missions presents Tom & Dora, EFCA missionaries to the Roma people, freshly returned from their most recent trip to Europe.



Upcoming Sermon Topics

October 2 - Our Home - Heaven or Earth?

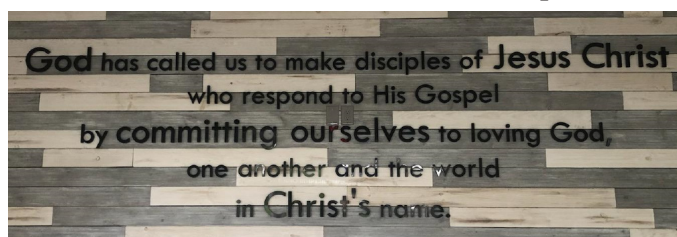
October 9 - 2 Kings 2:23-25 - Elijah's judgment on the boys.

October 16 - Depression, how to overcome shame, how to believe that we are loved by God. How to accept God's love. How to create self-discipline to be in God's Word and not feel guilty when we don't.

October 23 - War, violence, nonviolence and how we should respond to them all.

October 30 - Hope and encouragement found in Revelation.

New to the CrossWay lobby



Our mission statement, right there for all the world to see!

Coming Up at CrossWay Community

Sundays • 9:30^{AM} • Prayer, South Wing classroom

Sundays • 10^{AM} • Gather for worship together

Sundays • 11:30^{AM} • Sunday School for all ages

Tuesdays • 1^{PM} • Ladies Bible Study

Tuesdays • 7 - 9^{PM} • Small group @ Hinkles' home

Wednesdays • 7^{PM} • Underhill Club @ Marchiones' home

Sat., Oct. 1 • 9^{AM} • Men's breakfast @ Bob Evans

Sat., Oct. 1 • 9^{AM} • Women's breakfast @ Bob Evans

Sun., Oct. 2 • 11:30^{AM} • Tom & Dora, missionary update

Sun., Oct. 2 • 6^{PM} • Monthly church prayer hour

Wed., Oct. 5 • 7^{PM} • Elder meeting

Thurs., Oct. 6 & 20 • 7^{PM} • Veurink/Le small group

Fri., Oct. 7 • 6^{PM} • Men's discipleship program: What & Why

Fri., Oct. 14 • 6^{PM} • Men's discipleship program: How



God Likes What He Sees

“Do you really think, after the cross, your shame drives God away? Nope. Your shame is precisely where He can recreate you the most gloriously. You think you’re disgusting to Him? Wrong again.

“The wrong things about you are where He loves you the most tenderly. God welcomes high-maintenance men who keep coming back to Him for more mercy and more mercy and more mercy, multiple times every day. He isn’t tired, and He isn’t tired of you.” (p.34).

Now, perhaps, picture a boxer. Now, imagine this boxer hitting you as you try to enjoy your walk. It’s kind of hard to enjoy your walk when you’re getting hit over and over again. Our walk, our conversation, our listening to, our enjoyment of God is so hindered when we keep hitting ourselves, beating ourselves up over past sins, real or imagined.

Let me ask you a simple question related to our opening podcast quote. So, imagine God looking at you right now, as you look in the mirror. What is the expression on His “face?” What if, because you have been looking at Jesus (albeit imperfectly!), He sees the Image of His Son in you? Scripture says this is what our Father sees when He looks at you: The Image of His Son. (2 Cor.3:18-4:6) Paul goes on to say the life of Jesus is visible in our body . . . (2 Cor.4:10)

Another simple question: Do you know, truly know, not just in your head (because you are supposed to!), but, in your deepest of hearts, that God loves you? The expression on His face as He looks at you is one of pleasure and pride. “This is my beloved son/daughter.” (John 17:26)

May I encourage you in your walk? Please, put down the boxing gloves. Stop beating yourself up and keep accepting by faith, that out of love for you, Jesus took the blows from the Father that we deserved and was resurrected as the first fruits of God’s new creation — and He is making us to be a part of that. So, please, go enjoy your walk with God. He’s waiting for you.

God was waiting for me to join Him in a walk.

Walks often function as my prayer time.

Sometimes I will listen to a podcast as I did on this walk. On this particular podcast, one of the hosts said the following: “God never looks in your mirror and wishes He saw someone else.”

Now I know what some of you are thinking already — this is a podcast with “me-centered” teaching, a bit of “psycho-babble” that is not at all God-centered. Pastor Bob, are you trying to throw sanctification and becoming more like Jesus out the window? I mean, come on, God is happy with who you are now, the person staring back at you in the mirror? You’re trying to tell me He doesn’t want you to change?

I’m only voicing these possible objections because that’s the way I would have responded to such a saying a few years back. But now? Now I see these words as an invitation to give up that nagging sense of shame that often invades and pervades my life. Self-loathing, for me, seems to be often only a step away from where I’m walking. Ray Ortlund, in his book *The Death of Porn* extrapolates a bit on this:

“Maybe you look at your mess and think: If God has any self-respect at all, he must despise me. He’d be wrong not to despise me. But that despairing thought keeps you hanging back from God. Self-punishment doesn’t make you more forgivable. It blocks your way to forgiveness.

“He is inviting you to come out of hiding and stand tall again. He’s not at war with you. Why? Because you aren’t really all that bad? No. Because in one blinding moment of painful atonement on the cross, the dark energy of your evil forever lost its bid for supremacy.

A visit from a long-time friend

Steve T. made a point of touching base with CrossWay when he came to Grand Rapids the last week of September to firm up this year's funding for Systematic Asian Leadership Training (SALT), the mission program he has run so successfully for many years, with a little help from CrossWay. We showed Steve our new building addition, since this is his first visit since we opened our lobby and south wing. We then adjourned to the library to enjoy



Meeting with Steve: (l-r) Pastor Manuel, his son Jared, Annette Doerr, Paul Samuelson, (Steve) and Pat Sanford.

some cider and donuts and oranges, along with some good lengthy conversation with his prayer/communications support team.

Steve and his wife Merrilee are in semi-retirement, living in Steve's hometown of Fairmont, Minnesota, where he's planting fruit trees and vegetables on the ample land God has provided for them after decades of living in the cramped quarters of Hong Kong. Merrilee is enjoying the opportunity to tend her flower garden and leading a Bible study, while Steve is shepherding their church's young adult program. He also leads the local EFCA church's missions program, which he is developing into a congregation that sends missionaries into the mission field, a new avenue for service he finds truly rewarding. His "day job" remains with SALT, for which he travels in the U.S., maintaining contacts he has built over the years to retain financial support for the ministry.

Now that Steve and Merrilee are "back home," SALT staffing is handled in Hong Kong and in-country, with

Asian pastors serving as trainers, having once been trained themselves through the SALT curricula. They now have taken over the task of writing additional teaching programs. Each SALT graduate, already a Christian leader, learns not just the Bible-based material but also how to teach it so that the message can be multiplied throughout countries in Asia where Western missionaries are no longer welcome and where Gospel dissemination is difficult, at best.

SALT is helping to spread the Gospel into dark corners through these dedicated leaders, despite all the obstacles they face. Additionally, the in-country leaders are taking on the task of fundraising, with SALT expecting to phase out entirely within two years, having fully launched a self-sustaining ministry within closed countries.

Please pray for:



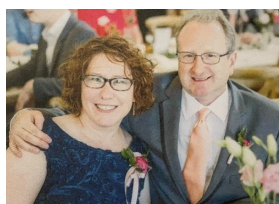
Steve and Merrilee's ministry leadership at their home EFCA church



SALT to continue to thrive on rocky soil, as the graduates of the program go on to train others and write new materials to sustain the ministry.

To explore joining the prayer/communications team that enlivens CrossWay's support for Steve and Merrilee, please contact Pam Reed, Missions Coordinator.

Plan to greet Tom & Dora



Tom and Dora B. are coming to CrossWay Sunday, Oct.2, to visit the congregation that sent them many years ago to the Czech Republic.

Our adult Sunday School organizer Michael Stevens has graciously opened a slot in the schedule for them to update us on their work with Roma Networks and their recent trip to Europe, where they anticipated meeting with network partners, until Be there!

The “At Any Cost” Mindset

Our Lord has taught us the first step in preparing for persecution, and our Chinese Christian family members have walked it out in exemplary fashion under a brutal Communist regime for more than 70 years. Christ instructed us to count the cost of discipleship and take up our cross daily. Following Him is costly, but since He is infinitely worthy, we must continue paying without a thought when persecutors raise the price by opposing us.

The Voice of the Martyrs’ founder Richard Wurmbrand said, “A man really believes not what he recites in his creed, but only the things he is ready to die for.” **The first step in preparing for persecution is identifying the things we will do *at any cost*. We will read God’s Word, pray, worship, gather with other believers and witness for Christ, and nothing will stop us from doing these things with willing and glad hearts.** Because we do these things in obedience to the commands of our Lord, their worth is beyond evaluation. The value of everything else in this world pales in comparison, including our very lives.

When I talk with Christians here in the U.S. and in other free countries, the word that constantly comes to mind is *unprepared*. Persecuted Christians in restricted nations have counted the cost and considered Christ worthy, so they prayerfully approach each day with an obey-at-any-cost mindset. Anchored by an understanding of God’s greatness and with their desires fixed on His eternal kingdom, they approach life differently from

Prepared for Persecution

by Cole Richards, president, The Voice of the Martyrs

most Christians in free nations. Too many Christians in free nations live in fear of those who oppose us while worrying about losing the things of this world.

For decades, our Chinese Christian family members have boldly, lovingly and humbly obeyed Christ, no matter how their government opposed them. When their gatherings were made illegal, they held church services anywhere necessary to avoid the secret police. And they also prepared for the inevitable arrests so that, when pastors were imprisoned, others in the congregation were ready to take their place. Meanwhile, the imprisoned pastors embraced their time in jail as a new ministry assignment from the Lord: They simply continued their work.

Today, the Chinese Communist Party has arrayed a horrifying technological apparatus against Christians. Hundreds of millions of facial recognition cameras help track believers’ whereabouts and create a digital record used to punish them for their so-called disloyal and illegal activities. Their response to this heightened surveillance has been the same as their response to previous threats and attacks. They simply continue in obedience with joyful hearts, having counted the cost and considered Christ worthy of *any* price they must pay.

Are we, our families and or churches ready to respond to opposition in a likewise manner? If not, then we are not prepared for persecution.

Save the date: November 20

As we prepare ourselves for the persecution likely coming our way, we can encourage some Christian brothers already in chains for Christ.

Sunday, Nov. 20, our Sunday School hour will be devoted to our 7th annual Christmas cardwriting party for persecuted Christians.

Each year, we bring our sacred holiday cards to the South Wing, where we spend some time together addressing greetings, praying, and eating cookies. Included in our cards are heart-language Scripture verses designed to



bless the recipient, be that the intended prisoner or perhaps his guard or warden. It’s communication with no response anticipated, And we pray that the message will land on the heart that God intends to reach.

If you don’t have any sacred cards on hand, come and select among the cards we’ll have for sharing. We’ll provide you with prisoner profiles and Scripture inserts, courtesy of The Voice of the Martyrs website *Prisoneralert.com*. We’ll also ask a donation for international postage, as you are able. Friends and family are welcome, too!