

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Divine Encounter (Just what you don't expect)

It was a summer day in Sychar. The women in the village made their daily trips to the public well early when the temperatures are cooler. Mornings around the well were as much a social club as a place to fill water jugs. The well was dug by ancestors of some of the residents a century or more before. It was the village's only source of a commodity that none can live without.

It was hot. The sun was directly overhead as the woman slowly made her way along the path to the well. She hated these daily trips. Most of all, she hated that she felt isolated and alone. She wondered if the donkey, tied up in the shade, ever felt this way. Probably not. The donkey was built to carry

heavy loads. The years of making these trips were taking a toll on her body and spirit.



She remembered a time when she was younger and more energetic. Married for less than a year, she looked forward to morning trips to the well. Although she did not appreciate the persistent questioning of the older women about her sex life. She wanted children. But so far, she mostly received bruises when she brought the subject up. She remembered when having children was something she could count on.

That was then. Five relationships ago. Her first husband was chosen by her family. He was much older but had a steady job. A friend of her father. He put her out a few years later. A pattern that occurred again. And again. She knew that finding her current partner was a real blessing. Kind and generous. Not willing to listen to the gossip on the streets. They were both beyond the point where children were part of their plan. She finally had a little security in her life.

Life began to unravel after her first husband divorced her. Looking back, she was fortunate. The constant abuse might have ended her life eventually. It did not take

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Volume 20 Issue 15

March 15, 2020

Special points of interest:

*** Worship Design will meet on Monday, March 23rd at 6pm in the Asbury Library.

*** Leadership Team will meet on Monday, March 16th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.



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Camping (The Tent of the Lord's presence)

Have you ever gone camping? It's been a long time for me. I suspect that the thrill of sleeping on the ground under the protection of fabric, no matter how waterproof, starts to dwindle after a certain age. Camping is a tame way for us to have an adventure, among other benefits.

I remember going on camping trips as a Boy

Scout. I had a lot of fun. And my experiences helped shape the way I view camping.



But have you considered that persons without a home

built from more permanent materials might not find camping to be so much a thrill as a necessity? Living in a tent can be a vacation, or it can be a necessity, depending on your circumstances.

We read about a large group people living in tents for years in the Bible. We find these stories in the Book

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Camping (The Tent of the Lord's Presence) ...cont from page 1

of Exodus. This book follows Genesis, which begins with the story of creation. Exodus is a story about people escaping slavery with the help of the very God who did the creating in Genesis. The cries of despair coming from an oppressed people was too much for God to ignore.

Moses was one of them, but he had escaped oppression by being adopted into a family that was part of the privileged class of people. Those responsible for the oppression. Moses was an outsider to both groups. Yet God chose Moses, who believed along with a lot of other people, that he was unqualified. Nevertheless, Moses gives in to God's argument, and the whole bunch ends up living in tents in the wilderness. Starting over from scratch. Led by Moses, who was led by a distant God.

Realizing that the people needed God to be more available, the people are instructed to build a meeting tent. A place for God to dwell among God's people. The Good News Translation calls it the "Tent of the Lord's Presence." A thin place where heaven and earth hangout together. While the tent may be in a rather challenging neighborhood, the inside of

the tent was nothing like the hood. It is nothing like any other place on earth.

Except, it is like all other places.

God speaking through Moses gave specific instructions for decorations. For example, in Exodus 26:1, 31, and 36, we read a description of a woven fabric — *fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool*. We find this description again in Exodus 27:16. Why fine linen from a blend of cool and warm colors? Why wool?

Scripture contains precise instructions. The various pieces of woven fine linen in three colors is for the inside walls, a curtain, and each of the double-entrances. An otherwise stark, tent is made, more colorful, more diverse.

Isn't it fascinating that God chose a temporary place, a tent, to hang out with these folks? By using a tent, they could take it wherever they wandered. And they wandered a lot during that time. In search of a promise, God made to them. A promise much like the promise made to their ancestor, Abraham. But anyone who has packed and unpacked yards of woven fabric knows that there are wear and tear. Some threads start to unravel.

Later, the Israelites moved from a tent to a Temple during the time of King Solomon. An era of prosperity, power, and extravagance. The leaders "rewarded" God by using some of their treasures to adorn the temple. People are still doing this. Rewarding God's generosity by decorating a place for the Lord's presence. Keeping God content with hanging out in a divine meeting space, away from the activities that resulted in accumulating the extravagance.

The problem is that like the original tent, the temples, and thousands of divine meeting places built ever since, we confuse what God wants with our own desires. And these desires come out of our own sculpted-ness. Long after the Temple in Jerusalem was built, Jesus stood on those very stones. Jesus looked at the beautiful structure and declared, "I tell you this: not a single stone here will be left in its place; every one of them will be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2).

No matter how durable the material we choose to contain God, all attempts to contain God are eventually futile. The fabric begins to unravel. And God hangs out wherever God chooses to hang out.

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Divine Encounter (Just what you don't expect)...cont. from page 1

long before another man took her in. She was young, attractive, and wanted to be loved. She put herself into making things work. But they didn't. Each time she knew that she became the focal point for the morning meetings at the well. Some days she hangs on by a single thread. This is how it seems anyway.

What's this? A man is sitting at the well. Social customs were clear. Women fetched water, and men didn't hang out at wells. She didn't recognize the man, but she recognized the clothing.

She remembered a time when she saw a man dressed like this one. He was Jewish. A Rabbi.

Jews and Samaritans don't spend time together. The wounds between the two groups never healed from the time when their nation was split in two. Her ancestors separated and were conquered later by a power-hungry empire called Assyria. This was when they became known as Samaritans. The wounds that caused the separation were deeper than any well. And lasted longer.

The separation caused her people to see God from a different perspective. The Judeans still believed that God was found only in the Jerusalem Temple. Which Samaritans no longer had access to. What difference does it make anyway? Perhaps the Jews are right. Maybe Samaritans are cursed. At least this Samaritan is.

Water is crucial to life. And the woman did not have another place to get water. Besides, she was tired of going the other way every time a man

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In our Prayers

Curtis Young	Miriam Watson
Rachel Bastine	Shirley Craig
Norma Buzzard	Christopher Lewis
Mary Lyons	Sarah Tanner
Barbara McIvor	Elizabeth Wright
Austin & Mary Suffle	Judy Tanner

**FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE**

Elaine Lamoreaux
Mary Nations

Coming up this week

Mar 16	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		6:00pm	Leadership Team
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
Mar 17	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
Mar 18	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		2-3:00pm	Fitness Class
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6-8:00pm	Rec Nite
Mar 19	Thu	6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Mar 20	Fri	FIRST DAY OF SPRING!!	
		11am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
Mar 21			
Mar 22	Sun	9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship

DANCE CLASS
 (PART OF THE DANIEL FITNESS PLAN)
 JOIN US ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18TH
 FROM 1:30-2:30PM
 IN THE ASBURY ACTIVITY CENTER
 EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN IN ...
And its FREE!!

Asbury Worship Series Woven (Coming March 1)

The Season of Lent, which begins February 26, is seven weeks long. Including the partial week that starts on a Wednesday, we count forty days until Easter. That is when we don't count Sundays.

These forty days are symbolic of the time that Jesus spent in the wilderness following His baptism. We believe that this time is steeped in Holy mystery. But our traditions can reduce the Holy Mystery that we claim for it when viewed by those just outside the fence that separates traditional believers from everyone else.

We design worship at Asbury, based on what little we know about the people that God plans to send to worship with us. This goal leads us to

Book Club News

We chose to recast the Daniel Plan as a set of tools within a larger framework that we are calling *Life raft*. When I tell people about the Daniel Plan their mind jumps straight to dieting. Worse, they imagine a diet of vegetables, or worse, they imagine a vegan diet. And this is usually enough to turn off their listening.

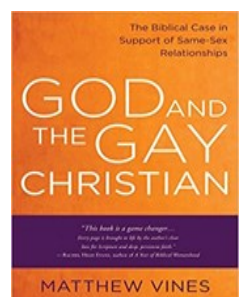
We each hear through filters that come out of who we are at the time. This sculpting comes from our family, our ancestors, our community and society. And we are also shaped by whatever religious beliefs we adopt from those around us.

Our next subject for book club also comes with loads of context. When we hear the word "homosexual" our responses are conditioned by our sculpting. For the next few weeks, we will explore the sculpting, unraveling, and re-weaving of a family living in Wichita, Kansas.

Matthew Vines learned the Bible from his parents and from the church that shaped his view of God. His views of sexual identity and sexual orientation were shaped by how he learned to interpret words translated from ancient texts. Matthew never questioned what he

knew to be as divine truth. That is, until he decided to tell his family that he is gay.

Matthew shares that he later learned that his father would describe the day that Matthew came out of the closet as the "worst day of his life." This news broke during the year after his dad's sister died. And this was his worst day?



Matthew was like a lot of young adults. He had a lot of the same hopes of other people his age. Matthew wanted to be loved for who he is. He imagined that someday he would meet someone to share his life with, and raise children. But when Matthew realized he was gay, his hopes were called into question.

The Bible, that Matthew knew condemned gay relationships. His dad's worse day became a starting point for both of them to first come unraveled as the indisputable truths they both knew shattered.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team	Tony, Mirium
Ushers	Anthony, Jim
Production Team	Jonathon, Terrance
Children	Patrice & Mirium
Worship Leaders	Cyndi
Café	Christine & Norma

Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Dir. Operations
Blair Neifert	Farm Manager
Matt Dee	Farm Operations
Israel Unger	Function to Funding
Kim Sims	Connections

Asbury Café

Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday before worship for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for worship.

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts

set aside our customary language. Instead of "Lent," we choose Easter preparations or some other phrase using more familiar words. Words that are more secular because they have multiple meanings in everyday use.



Wall Street, Seung Hoon Park Susan Spiritus Gallery 2

Matthew chose to devote years of intensive research into what the Bible says about homosexuality. And in his book, *God and the Gay Christian*, he takes explores answers to these and other questions:

- Do biblical teachings on the marriage covenant preclude same-sex marriage or not?
- How should we apply the teachings of Jesus to the gay debate?
- Can celibacy be a calling when it is mandated, not chosen?
- What did Paul have in mind when he warned against same-sex relations?

No doubt, this book, when it was released, sparked heated debate. Fortunately, this book also initiated sincere soul search-ing, and changes in attitude towards what it means to be a faithful, gay Christian.

We plan to finish our current book that describes the Daniel Plan in detail next week. In a couple of weeks we begin another book study.

I encourage you to come to our Wednesday gatherings. Our small group is a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion. We meet each Wednesday at Noon. There are still books available. While we appreciate donations to help with the cost of purchasing books, your participation is what matters the most. Please accept a copy of this book as a gift.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — FlintAsbury.org. Come join us for a light lunch, fellowship and discussion. Our food selections have been fantastic and we always have plenty to share.

Woven (Coming March 1) ...Cont. from page 4

Woven, is what we call our worship series that begins on March 1. The first month that we associate with Spring. And our series concludes on Easter Sunday.

For this next series, we reference a book, titled *Woven*, as a thematic outline.¹ *Woven* is about a spiritual awakening. The writer identifies three modes, phases, stages, or otherwise, poetic labels for his spiritual journey. The invitation is for us to determine how his journey relates to our own. And to be changed. He identifies these segmentations as sculpted, unraveled, and woven.

These milestones or places can be thought of as phases. The first place is our starting point. The place where our journey begins. We start here in our series by first celebrating together in the spirit of *Mardi Gras*. Fat Tuesday. We dance to the music, only partially aware that in doing so, our bodies are moving. One of the five critical foundations prescribed by the Daniel Plan. Some of us will indulge in a *paczki*, or two. After all, it is a party.

The next day is Ash Wednesday. This year we join with our friends in Flushing as we kick off the Season of Lent with worship. We haven't left home. We are still our sculpted selves. We still live within both visible and invisible fences that keep us safely separated from the other. And in some frightening ways, separated from God.

The first day of March. The month of Spring. We begin our process of unraveling by first meeting ourselves. We meet ourselves from a distance. As though we are strangers who encounter ourselves for the first time. Who are we? Am I meeting the person I expected to meet? We begin with the community that shaped our views. How we see the world.

By March 15, we hope to transition from the safety of our fenced-in world to a place where our sculpted self crumbles. We are in the wilderness with Jesus. We see, hear, and experience ideas that seem foreign to us. We try to imagine life outside the fence. We meet our unraveled self along the path we walk.

By the first Sunday in April, our attention turns towards new possibilities. Can we imagine resurrection? The place we are headed towards becomes more visible. We find a new weave by taking the deconstructed strands of our past beliefs and discover a new way of being and doing. A place where the inside and outside come together. We meet our woven selves.

I pray that you will plan to journey with us.

Here is the plan for March and the first two Sundays in April.

***Fat Tuesday Celebration - February 25, 2020***

Sometimes we just have to be bad to remind us that being bad is not worth it. Join us for a *paczki* and music at 6 pm in the Asbury Event Center in the lower level. While your here be sure to sign up for Daniel Plan 2.0 and take home a personal journal to help guide you through the Season of Lent.

Ash Wednesday - February 26, 2020

Treat your *paczki* hang-over with a worship service to kick-off your participation in *Life raft*. We join with other communities at Flushing UMC for a worship service at 7 pm.

March 1 & 8, 2020***Sculpted******March 15, 22 & 29, 2020******Unraveled******April 5 & 12, 2020******Woven***

Pastor Tommy

¹ Joel McKerrow, *Woven - a faith for the dissatisfied*. Sydney, Australia: Acom Press, 2019.

² Seung Hoon Park, an artist from Seoul, S. Korea, is creating the most unusual images with the use of an 8×10" camera and threading the film to mimic the look of woven textiles. He uses both 8mm and 16mm films to create his work, each with a different outcome.

woman approached her. And Jews don't associate with Samaritans any way. Jewish men find Samaritan women to be disgusting. So no worries. She was sure the man would leave as soon as he realized she was coming his way. No respectable Jewish man would get anywhere near her.

As she made her way closer to the well, the man did not move. He just sat there looking at her. But not with condemnation. More like the way a father looks at his young son or daughter. A look that spills over with love and promise. The look that a teacher might give a star pupil. "Oh, great. Surely he isn't going to hit on me," she thought to herself. "He probably thinks I'm a prostitute."

She was tired of going the other way every time a man or woman approached her.

She was determined to fetch her water and get on with her day. So as she approached the well, she didn't look at the man at all. Instead, she went straight to the well. He spoke clearly, in a manner that expressed certainty about himself. "Give me a drink of water," he said. His tone sounded nothing like a man demanding to be served by a woman. His voice was gentle. Like someone asking a favor with no particular expectation and no strings attached. She suddenly felt empowered.

She turned to look at this man, this Jewish man, this Rabbi, who dared to jump across a chasm of social distance. This man looked up at a woman, a Samaritan woman, a woman with a past, to ask a favor.

You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan—so how can you ask me for a drink?" the woman responded with a renewed confidence that she didn't know she had in her. Surely the conversation will end here. But it did not.

The man continued to speak with this woman with strange words. Poetic words. With words of hope and opportunity. But this man doesn't realize who he is talking to. How could he? He is a stranger. A kind stranger. But a stranger, nonetheless, who couldn't know her past. If he knew her history, they would not be talking.

The man describes her current living situation. How does he know? "You must be a prophet?" she declares. As the conversation continues, the woman could feel every thread of her perceptions, her experiences, her past hurts, coming unraveled.

In her excitement, the woman forgets all about who others say she is. Instead, she holds tight to the woman revealed by her conversation with a stranger. She leaves her water jug at the well and runs back to the village. She can't hold her excitement. "Come and see the man who told me everything I have ever done. Could he be the Messiah?"

Do you feel like you are tied up so tight you feel as though you can barely move? Are you feeling some of the threads of who you are coming loose and falling around you? I invite you to join us and learn how becoming unraveled may just be the key to a future of greater hope. We meet each Sunday at 10:30 am. I hope to see you there. You can find more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

Come and see the man who told me everything I have ever done. Could he be the Messiah?

John 4:29

If you haven't yet signed up for the Daniel Plan, be sure to do so.³ Each person living in our community who signs up receives your very own copy of *The Daniel Plan Journal*.⁴ If you are not a part of the Asbury Community, we still invite you to participate with us, but we ask that you purchase a copy on your own. These journals can be purchased on Amazon or from other vendors. You can also go to the DanielPlan.com store to buy this and other resources.

Pastor Tommy

Recommended books and citations

- ¹ McKerrow, Joel. *Woven: A faith for the dissatisfied*. Sidney, Australia: Acorn Press, 2019.
- ² Vines, Matthew. *God and the Gay Christian*. New York: Convergent, 2014.
- ³ Warren, Rick, Dr. Daniel Amen, Dr. Mark Hyman. *The Daniel Plan*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- ⁴ Warren, Rick, and the Daniel Plan Team. *The Daniel Plan Journal - 40 Days to a Healthier Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

THE **DANIEL** PLAN

GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR YOUR HEALTH

YOU CAN STILL SIGN UP ...

Why the Daniel Plan is so important ...

I have never met Pastor Steve Willis. But there is something that he said that is haunting me. And I hope that it will haunt you too. Pastor Steve's call to action is powerful, timely, and the shoe surely fits our community. We were poisoned by our public water system. But we can recover. Our children can recover. But the problem, at this point, is not someone else's problem. It is our problem. We have the solution and Pastor Steve's challenge is a call to step up and do something about our health.

The fight for good nutrition was never more real to me than when I watched my kindergarten-aged son struggle with adapting to his physician-prescribed, mind-altering drugs. Lucas had been having discipline problems in school, would frequently struggle with the ability to focus on tasks at hand, and found himself well below grade level in many academic areas...This is more than a health issue; it is a social justice issue. Millions of our children are not reaching their God-given potential because we, as adults, won't take the steps necessary to get them the nutrition they need. For the church, this problem has to be seen as a moral issue. For the sake of our children and our nation's future, we have to do better.¹

I agree. We have to do better. Teachers, healthcare professionals, counselors, clergy, and others are anticipating the first part of Pastor Steve's story to be a common story. Children with higher concentrations of lead in their bodies are prone to exhibiting behaviors that are not conducive to learning, including lower cognition. The only known solution is available to us. But not in a drive-through or at a liquor store.

But how is a community that sits in the middle of one of the least healthy counties in Michigan going to be able to regroup and move forward with the necessary changes to help ourselves and our children?

First, we are going to admit that we are incapable. We are going to stop making excuses for ourselves. We are going to quit pointing to some other power, whether it is the force, the ineffective excuse, "I'm spiritual, but I don't go to church" and the hundreds of other absurd claims that I hear every year as to why I don't see people on Sunday mornings. We are going to repent — that is, we are going to change. Our lives matter. Our children's lives matter.

The Daniel Plan
Faith, Friends, Fitness, Food and Focus

I found myself making a declaration this past week that I have declared before. I wrote and said that responding to God's will for our lives is a human right. And as a human right, we need to treat this right in the same way that we protect other human rights. But it is very difficult to respond to God's purpose for us when our health is less than it needs to be. The Daniel Plan is not the solution on its own, but it is a roadmap that points to and can help us pursue the solution. But the solution begins with God. Without God's power any plan is a non-starter.

By the way, Pastor Steve's son, Lucas, soon was off the drugs and today he is an A student. This story is not a one-of-a-kind, never to be repeated miracle. It is the sort of miracle that God offers every one of us. It is the miracle of making better choices. It is the miracle of taking care of ourselves and each other.

We will begin on Sunday, December 29, by writing down a resolution for 2020. For most of us, our resolution will begin in the same way. "In 2020 I will make my health and well-being a priority by participating in the Daniel Plan." And then we will write down a goal for each of the five areas: faith, food, friends, fitness, and focus. During the first five weeks of 2020, we will learn about each of the pillars of success, possibly modify our goals, and meet regularly with others who have made this same New Year's Resolution.

Make a New Year's Resolution for 2020 to commit to The Daniel Plan.

Join us each Sunday and invite your friends and neighbors. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30 am. *Dusty 2.0*, the musical, will be performed on Christmas Eve at 6 pm. We are praying for a big turnout, and that most of our visitors will return to participate in the Daniel Plan.

Pastor Tommy

¹ Warren, Rick. *The Daniel Plan*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan;

Life Group Questions & Notes

Come and see the man who told me everything I have ever done. Could he be the Messiah?

John 4:5-29 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read John 4:5-29. This may be a familiar story. Any surprises when you read it this time? Why do you suppose the woman fetched water during the middle of the day? What do you believe to be true about this woman? Read the text a 2nd time. What words gave you your information? How much did you fill in the blanks based on your prior understanding or your experiences?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Divine encounter*. This week our theme is unraveled. What does it mean to come unraveled? Have you ever felt like you were becoming unraveled? Were there any triggers that you can point to that began the process?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you to be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.

What if this idea of a place for the Lord to hang out, whether a tent or a stone castle, is a metaphor for you and I. Let me explain.

Last week I laid the groundwork for helping us to recognize that each of us lives in a "fishbowl" that is built

Not a single stone here will be left in its place; every one of them will be thrown down.

Matthew 24:2

during our early childhood, adolescence, and even into adulthood. And that we interpret the world through our experiences in our fishbowl. Like the fish, we don't realize that we are wet. We don't realize how much our experiences shaped our worldview.

Jesus was adopted into a long line of ancestors, dating back to Abraham, Jesus grew up in a Jewish household and community. He was educated in Egyptian schools, spent his teenage years in a small village called Nazareth, and used stories from His experiences to illustrate the points of His teachings. And we interpret the words of Jesus from a totally different context. Our fishbowl is different than the fishbowl that shaped Jesus. Our neighborhood is different than the one where the former Egyptian slaves first set up a tent for God to hang out.

Similarly, the stories of Matthew Vines and Josh McKerrow are different than our stories and the story of Jesus. They each lived in a fishbowl determined by where they lived, where they went to church, their families, their communities, and the society and culture that shaped them. Josh grew up in Sidney, Australia, while Matthew grew up in Wichita, Kansas. Joel's family attends an Anglican Church, while Matthew's family

attends a Presbyterian church. Both men had light skin and knew privilege. Jesus, on the other hand, attended a synagogue and likely had a darker skin tone.^{1 2}

Matthew and Josh write about learning absolute truths that were taught to them. And they each accepted these truths as children without question. These truths came out of how the place where their families went to hang out with God. Their church. And they were shaped by the way their families interpreted the very same Biblical text.

Putting aside whatever differences there may have been in the translations, there were universal truths in each man's upbringing. For example, neither learned the truths that are hidden by privilege. Their families interpreted scripture through the lens of a dominant culture. Jesus, as a Jew, grew up in a land occupied by foreign soldiers and leaders. Jesus grew up among oppressed people.

To interpret the world through our sculpted self is to know the things we know with little doubt. Even though we haven't given much thought to where such absolute knowledge comes from. When the world is full of unanswerable questions, it is comforting to have absolute truth to count on. So our sculpted selves become obsessed with what is truth and what is not. But our sculpted selves do not reach further than our own boundaries;

The reality is this. Our beliefs about God come from the particular biblical interpretation given by our specific Christian tradition, mixed in with the influence of culture. We believe what we believe because we have been shaped to find truth only in certain places. And this can be a tricky proposition to swallow. The idea that our claims to truth are actually shaped by our culture. It is humbling to recognize our own bias.

Our truths are the collections of claims that come out of our fishbowl of existence. Claims that we defend. McKerrow writes, "If we defend our fishbowls as absolute, they become the very thing that inhibits our further movement. They become our safety and our crutch. Our absolutes become our idols."¹

Our absolute truths become our idols? Can we really put a belief ahead of God? I asked the question two weeks ago, "What are you willing to die for?" Are we willing to die for our absolute truth? Are we instead able to admit that we could have it wrong? After all, it is not the first time that the church has confused absolute truth with fear and the desire to control.

McKerrow also writes about attitudes in his country towards immigrants. They also use labels to identify persons who find a way into their country uninvited. Labels, according to McKerrow, is "Our way of choosing not to listen to those who are not of our fishbowl." When we label a group of people, we are better able to defend what we believe to be true. While there are pragmatic and economic arguments against open borders, there is also an underlying fear that gives these argument power beyond their logic.

Our attitudes toward subjects like immigration are sculpted. They are integral parts of our fishbowl. And labeling people and ideas help us to ignore who they are outside of our label. As a nation, we recently experienced what happens to mothers and their children when people in power can declare war against a label rather than the actual people that the labels represent.

Children are ripped from their mother's arms and locked behind bars.

Welcome to the Asbury Community

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Neighborhood Connection



We envision a community in love with God, each other, and our neighbors evidenced by the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood. We are a center for worship & spiritual growth, a center for connections and a center for health & wellness.

Our goal is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into citizens who contribute to building and maintaining a vibrant neighborhood, and all residents are able to enjoy safety, good health, a culture that fosters life long learning and satisfying lives.

We believe that such an ambitious goal can never be attained without God's grace and abundance and Christ calls each of us to be disciples willing to share our witness through words and acts.

Camping (The Tent of the Lord's Presence) ...cont. from page 9

Mothers are imprisoned for trying to do what any good mother does — protect her children. But when labels dissolve into faces and voices and stories we have to fight harder to hold onto our beliefs. We are confronted with flesh and blood, kindred-spirits, children of the same God that we claim to follow. The same God who hangs out in whatever "Tent of the Lord's Presence" where we go.

Whatever tent that you visit where you hope to meet the God who created you, you run a risk. You run a risk that you will leave the tent knowing something that you didn't know before that may change how you see the world. In two weeks, we will move from looking at how we are sculpted to what happens in meeting places all over the world when people actually take the time to hang out with the Lord.

Our truths are the collections of claims that come out of our fish-bowl of existence.

I invite you to hang out with us in the tent of the Lord's presence that we call Asbury. We meet each Sunday at 10:30 am. I hope to see you there. You can find more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

If you haven't yet signed up for the Daniel Plan, be sure to do so.³ Each person living in our community who signs up receives your very own copy of *The Daniel Plan Journal*.⁴ If you are not a part of the Asbury Community, we still invite you to participate with us, but we ask that you purchase a copy on your own. These journals can be purchased on Amazon or from other vendors. You can also go to the DanielPlan.com store to buy this and other resources.

Pastor Tommy

¹ McKerrow, Joel. *Woven: A faith for the dissatisfied*. Sidney, Australia: Acorn Press, 2019.

² Vines, Matthew. *God and the Gay Christian*. New York: Convergent, 2014.

³ Warren, Rick, Dr. Daniel Amen, Dr. Mark Hyman. *The Daniel Plan*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.