

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Dance Lessons (Reclaiming God's Identity)

Volume 2 Issue 13

June 13, 2021



Tom Hanks, in the movie, *A League of Their Own*, said what men coaching teams of young boys and girls have said far too many times. "There's no crying in baseball!" The line in the script was not referring to an understanding found in a

book of rules memorized by coaches and umpires. This line was intended to draw laughs and connections with our own sense of what it means to be masculine. Real men don't cry.

In a recent interview, Anand Giridharadas, author of *Winners Take All*, shared that society is "teaching men that the only way to have dignity is not be a woman." Anand adds that to be a man is to "not be weak, not be gay, always hit first and never present yourself as vulnerable or in need."³

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You may still wear a mask while in the area if you are more comfortable. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you



Googolplex (Catching Fire)



Catching Fire is the 2nd novel of *The Hunger Games*, a trilogy series written by Suzanne Collins. The setting is a dystopia called Panem, located in North America. Panem consists of a

wealthy Capitol and 13 districts in varying states of poverty.²

Each year, children are selected by lottery from the districts for a reality program based

on a death match. The winner's district received survival resources, but the primary goal behind the reality show was entertainment. In the first novel, a primary character named Katniss volunteers to take her sister's place in the reality show. Katniss and her family are from the poorest of the Districts.

In *Catching Fire*, Katniss, in alliance with another contestant named Peeta, refused to conclude the show by

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Googolplex (Catching Fire) ..cont from page 1

fighting each other. The producers decide to capitalize on the couple's popularity, and Katniss emerges as a thought leader. She becomes a galvanizing symbol of rebellion against oppression which begins a chain reaction inspiring rebellion in the districts.

The Hunger Games was most popular among persons born after 1996. Now known as Generation-Z, this up-and-coming generation is more racially and ethnically diverse than any previous generation. Non-whites make up approximately 48% of this generation. And Gen-Z'ers are likely to be the most well-educated generation in history.³

Generation Z'ers are all familiar with what it means to "google" for information. Google is the company name that launched the most popular internet search engine in use today. And this series is based in large part on a book written by a member of Generation-Z, J. J. Warren.¹

My point is that vocabulary changes over time. New words come into widespread usage. Today we google to find information, and Gen Z'ers aren't familiar with *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The domain, Google.com, was registered in 1997. The word "google" didn't exist before then and thus unfamiliar.⁴

One version of the story about Google's origin involves a spelling error and a seldom utilized mathematical term, googolplex.

Initially, developers Larry Page and Sergey Brin called their new search engine BackRub. When they realized they needed a cooler name, googolplex came to mind since it represents a huge number.



I begin this week's article with this background as a way of easing into the subject of biblical translation. Or dare I say mistranslation. My dad called this "taking the long way around the barn." The origin of words in widespread usage plays a significant role in what we believe the Bible says. Can you imagine Jesus saying to Peter, "Why don't you google disciple and tell the others what it means?"

Tradition, what we're told when we are young, is perhaps the most powerful force at work when it comes to translation. "We've always done it this way" implicitly includes we've always believed this about that. Which is a lie. Tradition changes, often in subtle ways, with each generation.

Interpretations and translation evolve over time. Biblical interpreters use tradition, experience, a particular translation bias of the actual text, and reasoning to arrive at a specific presentation of the text. And in the spirit of clarity, some translations are rewritten using widely used language that retells the stories based on a particular understanding. Interpretations change and sometimes move further away from the truth.

Biblical translation is tricky. Most biblical interpreters try to address some of the complexity by breaking down the factors that affect how we read scripture. Which invites each

generation to read scripture with fresh eyes and open minds. Otherwise, we're prone to simply believing what we're told. Even though generations before us chose new interpretations based on their particular cultural bias and what they knew at the time.

Nevertheless, we each come to scripture with a frame of reference. We come with past beliefs that, more often than not, results in our reading scripture as an affirmation of our existing beliefs. This is fascinating when we consider that one of the primary themes of scripture is changing one's mind about God.

What might happen if we read scripture with the idea of learning something we didn't know before? What if we approached the Bible assuming that some of our beliefs may not be true?

THE BIBLE IS DIVINE TRUTH. I want to be clear on this point.

The main point of this week's episode is that human interpretation is often mistaken for divine truth. A couple of examples should prove helpful at this point. But let's start with a way to test our interpretations.

"God is love" is a prevailing theme in scripture. Perhaps we might make fewer interpretative mistakes if we run every interpretation we claim from scripture against this notion. Mistakes that cost thousands of lives. Love your neighbor as you love yourself is a part of this love theme found in scripture. The golden rule should be the gold standard that we use in evaluating our understanding of scripture.

In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Shirley Craig
 Mirium Watson



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Mary Nations



Coming up this week



Pastor Book Club will still be via Zoom, but will slowly start meeting in the Wesley Room depending on the size of our group. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016.

You may still wear your mask, if you feel more comfortable wearing it and when coming into the Asbury building. Please use hand sanitizer that is placed throughout the building.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

Jun 14	Mon	6:00pm	Worship Team (Library Conference Room)
Jun 15	Tues	10:00am-12:30pm	Food/Water Distribution
Jun 16	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
Jun 17	Thu		
Jun 18	Fri		
Jun 19	Sat	12Noon	Food Not Bombs
Jun 20	Sun	10:30am	New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

(We are live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.)

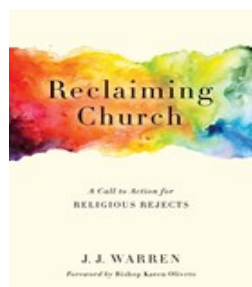
Asbury Worship Series

Coming Out

June 6 to July 25



Book Club News



We finished our study of *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs* by Joel Salatin and completed our worship series, *Living Water*. We learned how connected we are to each other, to our own identity, to the earth, and to God.

The world is an interwoven tapestry, and Joel Salatin's book brought to life the connection between scripture and organic farming. God's plan is for you and me to live healthy, happy lives, but we're often misled by profit motives and false promises.

Our book for June was written by seminary student J. J. Warren. J. J. is a speaker, preacher, and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights in the church. He is a graduate of New York's Sarah Lawrence College and is currently attending Boston University School of Theology.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony, Mirium	Welcome Team
Anthony, Jim	Ushers
Jonathon, Terrance	Production Team
Miriam	Children
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Christine & Norma	Cafe

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor & Exec Dir
Connie Portillo	Office Manager
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Exec Chef & Dir Opers

The Center for Disease Control issued new guidelines for wearing face masks on May 13 that offer great hope for more of us coming out into the open. After a year and a couple of months of isolation from seeing smiles and frowns, many of us are excited to rejoin the show in progress. A production that was interrupted when a deadly virus spiraled out of control.

The guidance mandates the wearing of face masks for the unvaccinated. This affects a much smaller

As a certified candidate for ordination in The United Methodist Church, J. J. faces a process that traditionally disqualified openly gay candidates. However, the UMC is in the midst of a historical argument that makes way for J. J. and hundreds of other candidates to respond to God's call on their lives. While able to live as the persons God created them to be.

J. J.'s visibility increased quickly after an impassioned plea for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons at a special meeting of the UMC's top lawmaking assembly in 2019. After his speech went viral, J. J. was later interviewed by HuffPost, NBC, and WXXI Radio.

In his book, *Reclaiming Church*, J. J. Warren calls for his generation to come together in transforming the contemporary church from an exclusionary club to a movement that is open to all people. A church that not only welcomes the LGBTQ+ community but offers leadership and ordination regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Matt DePalma	Farms Manager
Chris Freeman	South Campus Bldg Mgr
Israel Unger	Finance Director
Kim Sims	Connections Suprv
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Katelin Maylum	Sr Mgr Local Food
Jose Trejo	<i>Enlace de Idioma Español</i>

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.

group than one might think since persons refusing to get vaccinated are often the same group refusing to wear a face mask. "It's about freedom" is one retort I've grown weary of hearing. Fortunately, businesses still have the option of requiring a face mask to be worn along with healthcare facilities and public transportation. The pandemic isn't over — it's just less of a threat.

A few of us meet in person each week, and we invite you to join us for our conversation about J. J.'s book. New cases of the coronavirus are at their lowest levels in a year in Michigan. However, we continue to encourage diligence.

While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that there remains a large number of persons that are not vaccinated. Therefore, we require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking. We strongly urge all persons to get vaccinated as soon as practical unless advised not to by your doctor.

We each make our own arrangements for lunch at this point. We look forward to returning to pot-luck lunches later this summer if the national targets for vaccinations are met. The CDC relaxes recommendations for wearing face masks.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away I encourage you to [join us online](#) for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others say by calling (929) 436-2866 -- enter the meeting ID, 282 039 5568#.

We are a diverse group, and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

¹ Warren, J. J. *Reclaiming church: a call to action for religious rejects*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020.

Coming Out (June 6 to July 25) ... Asbury Worship Series

Coming out is easy for a lot of us and not so easy for most of us. "Is it really safe?" we ask. "Is it really safe to reveal our vulnerabilities to one another?"

Part one of our new series coincides with the celebration of Pride Month. An annual tribute to the victims of a police raid in 1969 of the Stonewall Inn — a place where persons could gather whose gender identity or sexual orientation differed from their gender at birth. Coming out for persons coming to terms with their actual identity is substantially more terrifying than choosing to leave my face mask at home.

Fortunately, activist Brenda Howard, often referred to as the Mother of Pride, organized a way to keep the subject on the minds of a growing number of people. Including people with friends and family struggling with fears of coming out before being found out. And Pride Month took root and grew into a national time of recognition.

That these two life-giving opportunities share the calendar looked like a problem at first glance. Standing in solidarity with people made to feel abnormal for being who God created them to be, is crucial to the Asbury community. After all, we claim to be an inclusive community that puts the teachings of Jesus Christ into action. And as our spiritual leader, I don't want to take away from celebrating the coming out of any who risk relationships and hurt to be who they are wherever they go.

Yet, I realize that the losses created by our response to the pandemic are painful. Everyone was affected because so many of us were infected. And some of the same brokenness that is the human condition led to the needless loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. It's time to come out again and face a new normal. And we need to talk about it now.

Stay tuned. Meanwhile, share your thoughts, prayers, and creative gifts with our community. Testimonies are powerful. What you feel and believe matters a great deal. Let's plan to celebrate together.

I would be remiss if I did not emphasize that vaccinations are essential for everyone. Understandably a few have medical conditions where vaccination could be inadvisable. But the rest of us can protect our more vulnerable community members by ensuring that we aren't able to spread the virus. It's time to come out of whatever fears or biases keep you from being a part of the solution. Get vaccinated.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly explores live on both Facebook and YouTube. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](http://www.FlintAsbury.org) at [FlintAsbury.org](http://www.FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy

Dance Lessons (Reclaiming God's Identity).. *cont. from pg 1*

Masculinity is alive and toxic in our nation and in our community. Harmful views on what it means to be masculine were exposed in dying color during the pandemic. Amy Morin, in her article defines "toxic masculinity" as "cultural pressures for men to behave in a certain way" that is harmful for themselves and others.²

Alisha Haridasani Gupta, in her article, made reference to comments made by the Fox News host Tomi Lahren regarding a Twitter video of candidate Biden wearing a mask. Lahren commented that Joe Biden should "carry a purse with that."³

Research conducted by the Los Alamos National Laboratory and other studies showed men to be less likely than women to adopt behaviors that could prevent the spread of diseases like COVID. Men were less likely than women to wash their hands, observe social distancing, and wear masks. This makes society's idea of masculinity sound suspiciously like stupidity.

Perhaps crying belongs in baseball, just as taking precautions that help prevent the spread of deadly diseases is a sign of strength and intelligence.

Annabelle Bernard Fournier, in her article, "What Does Gender Nonconforming Mean?" writes that "Gender roles, despite existing wherever humans live together, can be oppressive and even harmful." Gender roles are societal norms or expectations.⁴

In support of her assertion, Annabelle argues that "Gender roles limit what any person can do and reduce a person's life to what they "should" do. It forces people to perform what is expected of them, rather than live authentically as who they feel they are."

In her article, Annabelle argues that even the idea of referring to a person's decision to not follow societal norms as "non-conformity" is problematic. Conformity suggests that it is better to be consistent with societal expectations than

to not conform.

On the topic of coming out for persons claiming a different gender than the norm, Annabelle writes that "When someone breaks out of the box, they are met with ridicule, disdain, and violence, with the ultimate goal of forcing them to conform."

Our new series, *Coming out*, is not just about non-conformity. Although non-conformity is a big part of following the teachings of Jesus, our conversations include our struggles to simply do what we want to do. Part one of our series focuses on the church's response to non-conformity in regards to gender identity.

J. J. Warren, in his book, *Reclaiming Church*, addresses his own struggles as a gay man to claim his identity. He chose to come out despite the negative ramifications of his decision on his future role in the church. While J. J. discovered that he was not alone, he also found out that his experiences growing up differed significantly from the experiences of most others sharing his struggle.¹

His book is an invitation for any who has felt rejected by the church to reclaim the very church that rejected you. In particular, J. J.'s focus is on persons rejected as a result of gender non-conformity. But the first step in reclaiming the church is to first reclaim our perceptions of God. And our view of God's will determines our view of God.

At the moment their eyes were opened and they suddenly fell shame at their nakedness.

Genesis 3:7

Scripture wrestles with humanity's struggle with God's will from the very beginning. And J. J. describes this struggle as dancing with God. The creation

story includes a scene where the first humans discover their nakedness and hide from God because they were ashamed.

How often do we feel ashamed when we face our true identity?

Welcome to episode one of our 2-part series, *Coming out*. In this series, we focus on claiming our true identity while reclaiming a perception of God based on the truth of scripture. We learn that God sides with the oppressed, marginalized, and rejected.

We have a new button on the homepage of our [website](#) - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We're also live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).

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Pastor Tommy

¹ [Most of the content for our series comes from:](#) Warren, J. J. *Reclaiming church: a call to action for religious rejects*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020

² Amy Morin, LCSW. Medically reviewed by Akeem Marsh, MD. "What Is Toxic Masculinity?," © *VeryWellMind*, November 26, 2020

³ Alisha Haridasani Gupta. "How an Assertion to Masks Stems From 'Toxic Masculinity' ", © *NY Times*, Oct. 22, 2020

⁴ Annabelle Bernard Fournier. Medically reviewed by Steven Gans, MD. "What Does Gender Nonconforming Mean?" © *VeryWellMind.com*, November 23, 2020

Often we use real gold, let's call it economics, as our gold standard. Whatever is good for me personally becomes our gold standard for interpreting scripture. Knowing this, when scripture is challenged by individuals speaking on behalf of oppressed groups, we claim that their interpretation is self-serving. Perhaps it is self-serving, but freeing the oppressed is undoubtedly consistent with scriptural mandates.

Given this background, consider how you answer the question, "What was the offense of the people living in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah that angered God?" The most common response to this question is the offense of sodomy. However, keep in mind that the word "sodomy" was created sometime around the year 1049, according to J. J. Warren. Although there are various pathways in the etymology of "sodomy," it's clear that this word was made up centuries after the Bible was compiled.

Fortunately, the sin of Sodom is summarized in the Book of Ezekiel. The prophet Ezekiel compares Jerusalem to Sodom in explaining God's anger with the people living there. The Good News Translation states that "they did not take care of the poor and the underprivileged." The prophet also called the people of Sodom "proud and stubborn" (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

Hospitality, putting love into action, is a dominant theme of God's expectations for you and me. Most of us describe God's expectations for hospitality as radical. The story of Sodom's destruction found in Genesis offers an exaggeration of the opposite of hospitality. The men of the village act inhospitably when they threaten to rape Lot's house guests.

Lot and his family were spared when Sodom was destroyed. Unlike the rest of the village, Lot acted hospitably. Notice that if we focus on interpreting this story through the lens of homophobia, we miss a critical lesson that should inform how we choose to treat immigrants and other strangers.

Paul, a follower of Jesus Christ, in a letter to the church in Corinth, writes that "While knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church." Paul continues by saying, "Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really know very much" (1 Corinthians 8:1).

If you take nothing else away from this week's episode, my prayer is that you consider interpreting scripture from this vantage point. As a preacher, it is my job to speak in convincing sentences with the confidence of someone speaking on behalf of God. This is a vulnerable place to be since I also make mistakes in interpretations. We all need to own our mistakes and learn from them.

What if this is all part of God's plan? What if we need each other to come to conversations with an open mind and open heart, ready to change our minds?

God promised to provide an advocate and guide to help us. We call this advocate the Holy Spirit. Scripture uses a Greek word, pneuma, meaning breath. In classic philosophy, this word referred to an inner creative spirit. Poetically, we say that God breathes the Holy Spirit into each of us, willing to accept this gift, which is the breath of life.

Anyone who claims to know all the answers does not know very much.

1 Corinthians 8:1

May God's Spirit fill you with wonderment about God's plan for your own life and how you uniquely fit into God's plan for the universe. Come out as the person that you believe God created you to be and trust that God's Spirit will be your guide and advocate.

Welcome to episode one of our 2-part series, **Coming out**. In this series, we focus on claiming our true identity while reclaiming a perception of God based on the truth of scripture. We learn that God sides with the oppressed, marginalized, and rejected.

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Pastor Tommy

¹ **Most of the content for our series comes from:** Warren, J. J. *Reclaiming church: a call to action for religious rejects*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020

² "The Hunger Games," © Wikipedia. Various citations.

³ Kim Parker and Ruth Igielnik. "On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future" © Pew Research Center, May 14, 2020.

⁴ David Koller. "Origin of the name "Google"," © January, 2004.

Life groups question & notes

While knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church. Anyone who claims to know all the answers does not really know very much.

1 Corinthians 8:1-2 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-2. What do you learn from this week's scripture? Have you experienced situations where someone seemed to claim a lot of knowledge while seeming to ignore God's call to love others? How did your experience inform how you use your knowledge?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Googolplex*. Have you ever been surprised by learning something new while reading scripture? How new was what you learned and how surprised were you? Are there examples of interpretations that seem truthful while seeming to forget that God is love? How do you handle such paradoxes? Did you learn anything new about the interpretations offered in this week's article?
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.

FLINT FOOD NOT BOMBS

Providing a HOT MEAL and/or local, organic
PRODUCE weekly.

SATURDAYS starting around 12NOON

Asbury United Methodist Church

1653 Davison Rd, Flint (810) 235-0016

Food Not Bombs is a loose-knit sharing free vegan and **Flint Food Not Bombs** believes other necessities of life—should privilege. Yet in a nation with a other nations, people continue to go hungry. This is immoral and unjust.



group of independent collectives, vegetarian food with others. that access of food—among be viewed as a right, not a military budget many times that of



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

[Facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs](https://www.facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs)

[Twitter.com/flintfnb](https://twitter.com/flintfnb)

Email: flintfnb@protonmail.com

Website: foodnotbombsflint.wordpress.com



We're currently looking for volunteers so we can expand. If interested, send us a message! Solidarity!

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.—MLK



JUNE DATES

Angel Closet & Food Giveaways

June 2nd & 23rd - 11am-Noon
Food Giveaways

June 9th & 30th - 11am-Noon
Angel Closet (Walk-ins only)

**MASK AND TEMPERATURE CHECK
REQUIRED FOR ENTRY.**



South Flint Soup Kitchen
3410 Fenton Road
3 Blocks North of Atherton Rd.
Flint, MI 48507

810-239-3427



ASBURY FARM FRESH

TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10!

Asbury Farms offers fresh produce every week!

Go to our website, FlintAsbury.org to place your order for a Veggie Box, or sign up for a subscription. You can also call our office at 810-235-0016 to place your order. We accept EBT and Double-up Bucks for a limited time only!!!

Call By Noon on Wednesday for Thursday delivery.

As parents, one of our most fervent desires is for our children to stay healthy and safe throughout every stage of life, from infancy to old age. And much of the decisions our kids make now and in the future are significantly impacted by our influence. We know: Your kids don't always act like they're watching and listening to you — but they are.

While being an exceptional parent comes with a lot of pressure, it's something each of us can accomplish. Through God's grace and by implementing some practical everyday strategies, you can be the [role model](#) you're called to be and help your children learn to make healthy choices in life. [Asbury](#) shares some wellness strategies you can begin incorporating today to foster physical, mental, and spiritual health.



Image via [Rawpixel](#)

Engaging in Worship

Worship is at the foundation of any Christian life. As such, it must remain a priority in your life if you want to be effective in leading your children in Christ. It's also essential that you encourage your kids to engage in worship on a regular basis as it will play a more significant role in helping them make good decisions than any other factor.

Along with making time for your personal worship (remember: your kids will notice), make sure you are making room for [family worship](#) at home. This might include anything from singing songs together to watching sermons online. And, if possible, attend corporate worship events (such as weekly church or summer camps) that foster community among believers.

Prioritizing Education

Though they may not see it yet, your children's education will play a major role in their livelihoods in the future. Regularly speak with your kids about the importance of education, and provide verbal encouragement and other types of positive reinforcement as they navigate school. If your child is struggling at school, evaluate their [learning style](#) to ensure they are being given the best chance to succeed.

This is another area in which you can serve as a role model. If you're unhappy in your career, for instance, you can change it by earning a college degree. Say that you feel led to become a teacher. You can take online courses that fit into your schedule and lifestyle and obtain a teaching degree and [license](#). Or, if you are interested in becoming a marketing professional, you can pursue a degree in marketing. Not only will returning to school arm you with new knowledge, skills, and credentials, but it will also show your children that they can achieve their goals in life.

Being Active

Exercise is a critical part of living healthily. Make sure you are maintaining a consistent [fitness routine](#) in your own life so that your kids see the benefits that come with it. As with worship, find ways to exercise [together](#) as a family. For some families, this means scheduling daily walks or bike rides. For others, it means taking weekend hiking trips. Whatever you do, try to facilitate fitness in your household on a regular basis.

There's no reason why you can't be the parent you want to be for your kids. Remember to keep worship, education, and exercise as priorities in your household, and you'll be well on your way to helping your children make healthy choices now and later in life. And most importantly, don't forget to serve as a good role model!

Join Asbury Church every Sunday [for services](#). Online services are available!

(Written by Jason Lewis, who is a personal trainer specializing in senior fitness. If you would like to reach out to Jason, you may go on [Stongwell.org](#))