



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Fully Engaged."
(Pentecost, 2025)
"Tough Love." Various Texts.

☐ **Day #1—Monday, August 18th. Read: Deuteronomy 10.12-15. –Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

This week's Compass will be a little different. Each day we will explore one of the five, core, spiritual disciplines in the Christian journey: ***Worship, Bible Study, Biblical Community, Prayer, Servanthood***. Today, we begin with **Worship**.

Why did God create you? To love you! You were created for God's pleasure! When God formed you in your mother's womb, God smiled and couldn't wait for you to grow and love Him back. We begin this week with three Biblical affirmations of why you are here on this earth.

1. You were created because God wants to love you. God wants to have a personal relationship with you! See Ephesians 1:4.
2. God has a plan for your life. God has created you with certain spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities. Part of living is discovering and learning what God has put you on this earth to do. One thing is certain; it always involves others. See *1 Corinthians 12:7-11*.
3. You were made to last forever. This life is not our only level of existence. We will either live eternally with God or eternally separated from God. Rick Warren, in his book *The Purpose Driven Life*, says, "Life on earth is just the dress rehearsal before the real production. You will spend far more time on the other side of death-in eternity-than you will here...This life is preparation for the next." See *Ecclesiastes 3:11*. When you remember these three truths, life takes on a whole new focus.

Worship is the natural response of a life that knows it is loved. When you worship, you are remembering that it was God who made you and it is from God that you receive life, hope, strength, and salvation. God gives, you receive. Your response is *praise*. Praise flows from the lips of those who know that all we have comes from a loving Father and He is in control. This is what author and pastor Max Lucado describes:

Praise is the highest occupation of any being. What happens when we praise the Father? We reestablish the proper chain of command; we recognize that the King is on the throne and that He has saved His people.¹

God gives! God has saved us! God has told us that He will never leave us! God promises that His love will last forever! What work does God want you to do to receive these promises? Nothing! Accept them and just love Him back!

Going Deeper: *Ephesians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Revelation 4:11.*

Going Forward: God put me here on this earth because He wants to love me!

Prayer: "My God, I pray that I may so know you and love you that I may rejoice in you. And if I may not do so fully in this life, let thy name go steadily on to the day when I come to that fullness...Let me receive that which you promised through your truth, that my joy may be full. Amen."

¹ Max Lucado. *Walking With the Savior* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1996).

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, August 19th. Read: 2 Timothy 3.14-17. —Examine: The Text and its Context.**

Bible Study. Do you identify with these words of Francois Fenolin?

Woe to those weak and timid souls who are divided between God and their world! They want and they do not want. They are torn by desire and remorse at the same time... They have a horror of evil and a shame of good. They have the pains of virtue without tasting its sweet consolations.²

We all struggle with the problem of “double mindedness.” A double minded life is characterized by ambivalence. We are just not sure where we stand. It is exemplified in Augustine’s famous request of God: “Lord, give me chastity, but not yet.” When we live a life of double mindedness, we desire intimacy with God, yet spend little time cultivating that intimacy. We desire to be giving people, but we do not share our resources. We want to be servants, but we want others to RECOGNIZE our sacrifices and our “servant-heart.” How can God transform our minds and hearts? Through the *daily reading* and *applying* of God’s Word!

The Bible helps us to learn how to live like Jesus lived. The purpose of Scripture, writes John Ortberg, “is not to help us get a 100 score on the heavenly entrance exam. It is to help us become equipped for good works.”³ Another way of saying this is, reading and applying God’s Word is God’s way of *changing us* from being “double-minded” to “single-minded;” living the way Jesus would live if Jesus were me. Again, this is the goal of discipleship.

We need to read the Bible “meditatively” as well as to study the Bible “academically.” Your goals should be to study God’s word with “the head;” doing research with study tools such as a concordance, Biblical encyclopedia, or Biblical dictionary. As well as taking time to simply “reflect” on a passage of scripture, letting a passage or verse speak to a particular situation in your life.

Of course, this is not an either/or situation. We can study the Bible in-depth, having our lives transformed, AND meditatively, letting Scripture “soak” into our souls. In these ways, we read the Bible with *head* and *heart*, allowing Scripture’s truths to transform our hearts and minds. Remember, in both instances the goal is transformation—not just information.

Going Deeper: *Romans 12:2; Matthew 4:3-4.*

Going Forward: God’s Word helps me to become like Jesus.

Prayer: Ask God to help you apply a scriptural truth that you have read today.

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, August 20th. Read: Matthew 18.15-20. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Biblical Community. Love. That’s what it’s all about! We were created to love God, others, and ourselves. Love means giving one’s self to another. When we truly love another, we “empty” ourselves and receive the other as they are. When we love like this, we experience unity. Unity is the goal of Christian love. Jesus prayed that those who love Him (His disciples, you and me) would love *like Him*. In Jesus’ love for the Father, Jesus emptied himself and accepted our human nature. We (humanity) can now come into the relationship with the Father that Jesus had—this is unity.

As disciples, when we receive God’s love and love in return, we join in the life of the Trinity—a life of *mutual, indwelling love*. A love that Jesus prayed His people would receive and give!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran Pastor and theologian during World War II. After his martyrdom at the hands of the Gestapo in 1945, Bonhoeffer continued to influence the world through his writings that reflected his personal faith in God during a very difficult time. In his book, *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer offers some insights into Christian community:

Christian community is like the Christian’s sanctification. It is a gift of God, which we cannot claim. Only God knows the real state of our fellowship, our sanctification. What may appear weak and trifling to us may be great and glorious to God. Just as the Christian should not be constantly feeling his spiritual pulse, so, too, the Christian community has not been given to us by God for us to be constantly taking its temperature. The more thankfully we daily receive what is given to us, the more surely and steadily will fellowship increase and grow from day to day as God pleases. Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.⁴

2 Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith, Eds. *Devotional Classics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

3 John Ortberg. *The Life You’ve Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).

4 Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Life Together*.

Going Deeper: *John 17:20-26; 1 John 1:6-7; Hebrews 10:24-25.*

Going Forward: Christian community is God's gift to me.

Prayer: "Thank you Father, for your community that you have called me to receive and to contribute. Where two or three are gathered, you are there! You have given us one another. Help me to honor the gift of another in my life. Jesus, you are love. You love me so that I can love others. I cannot love like this without the power of your Holy Spirit. Love through me today. Amen."

□ **Day #4--Thursday, August 21st. Read: Philippians 4.4-7. — Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Prayer. One method of prayer that has been used throughout church history is to pray the Psalms. Eugene Peterson writes that, "Most Christians, for most of the Christian centuries, have learned to pray by praying the Psalms." (*The Message: Psalms*) Praying the Psalms means to simply read one of the Psalms as a prayer. Psalm 100 is a Psalm of praise. It is an excellent way to pray, worshipping God for God's faithfulness. Pray this prayer today, focusing on the reasons why God is to be praised.

Pray without ceasing! Isn't that what the Bible says? Yes. Does that mean that we are to do nothing else but pray? No. I am a man. I have a hard time doing more than one thing at a time! However, there are ways that we can become attuned to the presence of God all around us and pray continually. I know people who have trained themselves to say a prayer of thanksgiving when their watch "beeps." Walt Kallestead, a Lutheran pastor, believes:

All our senses can serve as prayer triggers. When we hear a siren, we can pray for those in need. When we feel hunger pangs, we can pray for the world's starving. And when we are in pain, we can ask God to help everyone who may be suffering... Birthdays, holidays, promotions, and other pleasant events can be used to trigger prayers of thanks and appreciation.

Prayer can be as natural as smiling at a friend. I think God would like to hear from us more often!

Going Deeper: *Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 3:16.*

Going Forward: Starting today, and through the rest of this week, pray one Psalm (or more if you desire). A specific Psalm will be suggested as the closing prayers for the remainder of this week.

Prayer: Pray Psalm 100.

□ **Day #5— Friday, August 22nd. Read: John 13.31-35. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Servanthood. We were created to be servants. Jesus was a servant. He came into this world as a servant of the Father and achieved for us what we could not achieve for ourselves—righteousness before God. We serve because Jesus served. If there is one defining characteristic of a Christian it is love expressed in giving of ourselves to others in gratitude for God's blessings. In our *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the prayer that is often recited by the congregation after the offering is:

Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—ourselves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.⁵

Notice, we serve with joy because God has given us everything! A non-thankful Christian is characterized by an "entitlement mentality." A discipleship-oriented Christian is characterized by generosity rooted in the generosity of God.

Martin Luther, in his treatise "The Freedom of a Christian," characterized Christian servanthood with this paradoxical statement: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." Luther comments:

These two theses seem to contradict each other. If, however, they should be found to fit together they would serve our purpose beautifully. Both are Paul's own statements, who says in 1 Cor 9 [19], "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all," and in Rom. 13 [8], "Owe no one anything, except to love one another." Love by its very nature is ready to serve and be subject to him who is loved.⁶

Going Deeper: *1 Corinthians 9:19; 2 Corinthians 9:11; Romans 13:8.*

⁵ *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978).

⁶ Timothy Lull, Ed. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

Going Forward: I am free to serve.

Prayer: “God, let me use my freedom in Christ to serve others and be used by you to lead others to the freedom and joy found in you. Amen.”

□ **Day #6-Saturday, August 23rd. Read: Psalm 23.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness,’ saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are taught to imitate His life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and be delivered from all blindness of heart. Let therefore our chief endeavor be to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ. Whosoever then would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must endeavor to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ...Endeavor therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and turn to the invisible...He is truly great who hath great love... Do what lieth in thy power, and God will assist thy good will.⁷

Jesus came into this world and was obedient to the Father and the Father’s desire that you come home to Him. God does not want you to wander through life aimlessly, from crisis to crisis and doubt that you are *loved* and *valued* by God. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus reveals the heart of God; a Father’s heart that longs for His children to be forgiven, healed, fulfilled, and filled with hope! As disciples, we are to live for the glory of God in response to the love of God. The Holy Spirit equips the church (you and me) to love God, others, and self through...

- Worship
- Bible Study
- Biblical Community
- Daily Prayer (Solitude and Silence)
- Servanthood

If you commit to these core disciplines in your life, you will be a person of faith, hope, and love. You will stand with others in this church as a witness to what God can do with ordinary, broken, and hopeful people like you—and me! You will deepen your *love for* and *faith in*, Jesus. You will be transformed daily, to be the person God has created you to be! One day, God will complete what He has begun in you; one day, God will make all things new...

...the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever...²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:1-5, 20).

Going Deeper: Revelation 7:17; Exodus 15:3.

Going Forward: The purpose of my life is to follow Jesus, learn from Him, and love as He loved. God will give me the ability to do this as I turn to Him and let Him work in my life.

Prayer: “O God, who art truth, make me one with thee in everlasting love. Amen.”

⁷ Thomas A' Kempis. *The Imitation of Christ* (Boston: DeWolfe, Fiske and Co).