

FIRST — Happy Thanksgiving to everyone!! I pray you're reminded of God's extravagant kindness to all of us, especially His willingness to sacrifice His son Jesus on the cross as full payment for the penalty our sin requires. I pray you know the peace of His presence during the holiday and that your heart is slowly turned to the amazing narrative of the first coming of Christ by the time we gather for worship on the Sunday after Thanksgiving!!

SECOND — a reminder that our Holiday Season Sunday morning schedule begins this Sunday (November 30) and continues through Sunday morning, January 4: small groups meet @ 9:15 and one combined worship service meets in the sanctuary @ 10:30.

THIRD — I will not be with you on Sunday morning; Jeff will be filling the pulpit in my absence. After spending the Thanksgiving holiday with my family on SSI, I will be traveling to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, GA, for a time of physical rest, spiritual renewal, and spiritual guidance. In order to retreat @ this monastery, a person must agree to and adhere to the vow of silence taken by the monks. There is no TV on the premises and very limited WiFi access; retreating at the monastery is truly a solitary experience.

I want to ask you to pray for me while I'm on retreat. As a pastor, I find that I am reluctant to ask for prayers. "Why?" you might be asking. I think it's a combination of things. Pride is definitely one reason, not wanting anyone to think badly of me because I'm physically and spiritually weary, or unsettled about God's guidance as it relates to the future of FBC Cochran. Another reason I'm reluctant to ask for prayer is that I'm aware of the load many of you carry in your daily lives and I don't want to add weight to the burden you already tote. (I know that sounds crazy...I don't consider intercessory prayer any more of a burden than you do and yet I struggle with feeling this way!) Full transparency: the urgency of my physical travails invaded your prayer lives 12 yrs ago and I still wrestle with unwarranted feelings of obligation to this church for the amazing way God used you during that season in my life and my family's life! I'm sure there exist subsets of reasons I hesitate to ask for prayers but these are the most glaring.

So I'm asking you to pray for me. You want specificity? I can do specificity! Ask God to drench my heart in the following ways:

- Physical rest and renewal.
- Mental rest and renewal...peace and clarity in my thinking.
- A torrent of passion for the priorities & purposes of God.
- Ears that hear and discern the voice of God's Holy Spirit; discipline to sit quietly until all other voices are silent.
- Clear Biblical guidance related to "next" @ FBC; specifically the topic of a new building, location of the 8:30 service, ministry direction for the next 2-5 yrs, and positioning our church today in preparation for the mighty things God has planned for building His Kingdom through FBC in the future.

I know my tenure as your pastor is much closer to the ending than the beginning! For the past several months one of my frequent appeals to the Father has been, "Father, what do you want to accomplish through me @ Cochran FBC before You ask me to lay down the privilege of this mantle?" This is often followed by praying David's request in Psalm 19:13, "Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!" I never want to presume that I know the will of God in any matter pertaining to my personal life or the life of this church. But once God clearly reveals His direction, I want to boldly and enthusiastically move forward in harmony with the holy purposes of God.

Pray for me when you have a free moment. I've been trying to schedule this monastic retreat for two years! My yearning is to return to Cochran a renewed & inspired disciple. Grace & peace, love you. PK

