

**We are a church with one mission:** to grow followers of Jesus through grateful worship, genuine community, and generous service to each other and our world. We believe by loving God and loving people we can have an impact that really matters, and would like to tell you more about that. If you are interested in being a part of what God is doing with us, or just have some questions, **fill out the contact card** or ask the person next to you. **Please feel free to call or email too if you have any questions.**

## FAMILY NEWS AND NOTES

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### GOD'S FAMILY TIMES

**BIBLE CLASSES**  
Building—9:30 am Sunday

**WORSHIP**  
Building—10:30 am Sunday

**GROWTH GROUPS**  
Grose's -- 6 p.m. Sunday  
Irwin's -- 6 p.m. Sunday

**BIBLE CLASSES**  
Building—7 pm Wednesday

**Family Covered Dish Dinner:** TODAY after services. Hope you made plans to join in the fellowship and food.

**Bridal Shower Luncheon** to honor Alexis Stutzman: Ladies mark your calendars for Saturday April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 1 p.m. at the building. **Please sign up on the bulletin board if you plan to attend by April 16<sup>th</sup>** so that the ones preparing for lunch will have an accurate count. Don't forget to bring a recipe of your favorite dish to share with the bride-to-be.

**Dinner before Class:** Wednesday April 26th at 6 p.m.

Please remember to give your Betika donations directly to Sally Duriez if you desire to help with the monthly support of our lamb, Toavina.

Upcoming Ladies Days: Details on bulletin board if you might be interested in attending:

April 22<sup>nd</sup> from 9:30am-2:30pm hosted by the Brookville church  
May 6<sup>th</sup> from 9:30am-2:30pm hosted by the New Brighton church  
May 13<sup>th</sup> from 9:30am-2pm hosted by the Greensburg church

### Happy Birthday

4/5 Bruce Niehenke  
4/5 Joshua Canose  
4/8 Ashley Canose  
4/19 Ray Rusnak  
4/20 Trina Flamm  
4/27 Jason Bracken  
4/28 Rodrick Anokye  
4/29 Marilyn Magas

### Happy Anniversary

4/2 Ezekiel & Mary Fasanya  
4/7 John & Gail Gromley

*Arrangements for family members*

# FAMILY MATTERS

## Indiana

## Church of Christ

724.463.7240

April 9, 2017

### ***The 'Feminine' Trait Every Christian Needs to Learn***

The virtue of endurance was a 'female' attribute in New Testament times.  
Dr. Lynn H. Cohick (Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College)  
Part Two

#### ***Jewish Endurance and Martyrdom***

Two hundred years before Paul, the Jews in Judea faced martyrdom at the hands of the Hellenistic king Antiochus IV. During the second century B.C., Antiochus outlawed expressions of Judaism, such as circumcision and observing the Sabbath. Those Jews who resisted were often brutally killed. For example, the deuterocanonical book 2 Maccabees tells the story of two mothers who resisted the new orders and circumcised their sons. When discovered, their babies were hung about their necks and they were paraded through the streets, before being tossed to their deaths from the city wall.

In another example, Antiochus demanded that seven brothers and their mother eat sacrificial pig meat. As each son in turn refused to eat, he was subjected to horrific tortures, while his siblings and mother looked on. The sons testified to their ultimate deliverance, proclaiming that God would raise their bodies after death, thus highlighting the importance of belief in bodily resurrection. The same story is told in 4 Maccabees, which draws particular attention to the mother's experience in bearing her sons and suffering even greater agony than birth pains in seeing her children tortured to death before her eyes. She was able to endure the unendurable because of her piety; she is lauded as "more noble than males in steadfastness, and more courageous than men in endurance" (4 Maccabees 15:30). These Jewish martyrdom accounts promote endurance as a critical virtue for devotion to God and belief in the resurrection.

#### ***Thecla's Endurance***

One of the earliest Christian martyr stories is that of Thecla, told in the second century apocryphal book, The Acts of Paul and Thecla. In this non-biblical account (the "apostle Paul" in this story does not always act and speak in line with the biblical apostle Paul), Thecla embraces Paul's message, and decides to leave her family, which includes breaking off her engagement. Her mother is outraged, and wants Thecla burned at the stake for abandoning her family. Miraculously saved from certain death, she flees the city in search of Paul. When she finds him, she wants him to baptize her, but he refuses, saying, "May another trial not leave you worse than the first, and you might not endure but you might be cowardly," (3.25). Paul is concerned that further challenges might jeopardize her faith and so he is unwilling to baptize her before he has confidence in her ability to endure persecution—even to the point of death.

## CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

### PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Nathan Irwin and family as they are in Lyon, France for language training and are preparing to move to North Africa to serve there in July.
- For Mary Fasanya's asylum request to be granted and for the girls as they are in the USA without their husband and father. Also for Ezekiel as he is in Nigeria without his wife and daughters.
- For Mayleen Niehenke's visa approval to come to the United States from the Philippines and for a co-sponsor so that the procedure can be quickly expedited.
- Bill Tonkin who is at Indiana Square Personal Care Home, 1703 Warren Road. Lois says cards and visits are always welcome.
- Nick Ruffner, John & Gail Gromley's step grandson, who had another round of chemo in his treatment for leukemia in January.
- Cliff Brown was recently hospitalized. He came home March 5th but still deals with heart problems.
- Karen Plowman, Brenda Antonio's cousin, for healing of broken bones in her leg due to a recent fall.
- Dixie Kirk, sister in law of Dan & Debbie Kirk, whose testing of her lung showed no spots. She continues to heal from pneumonia.
- Jason Canose for healing as he continues physical therapy and thanksgivings for successful surgery to remove his gall bladder on March 15th.
- Dan Fitzgerald, a friend of Bob Reininger, for healing and recovery from a very serious operation on March 20<sup>th</sup>.
- The Yurky family as Brenda is struggling right now and is adjusting to new meds.
- Louanne Brown as she recuperates from carpal tunnel surgery done on March 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Samantha Jo Riley, a friend of Debbie Kirk, for healing from a gunshot wound.
- Hailynn Magas for consistent blood sugar levels and for healing of a broken arm.
- Sam Kirk for continued absence of infection in his body so that his shoulder surgery can proceed as scheduled later this month.
- Hanna, Emma Sesock's 14 year old great granddaughter, who has cystic fibrosis and is to be hospitalized for the next two weeks.
- Emma Sesock, who fell on Tuesday April 4<sup>th</sup> and broke her jaw and cheekbone. She is now home after being hospitalized at Allegheny General.
- Peace and comfort for Emma Sesock's family on the passing of her brother, Paul, on Friday.
- Jeff Shank, Patty Shank's brother, who is to have surgery on Tuesday April 11<sup>th</sup>.

*Prayer requests can be added to the family prayer*

Notice the emphasis on endurance; for as it happens, in the next city they visit, Thecla is again arrested and sentenced to death and again she is miraculously delivered. The following day, Thecla survives the beasts in the arena as well as the threat of being drawn and quartered. At the end of her ordeal, she jumps into a pool of killer seals, who perish amidst a flash of lightning; she understands this immersion as her baptism. The governor stops the spectacle, as he and the other spectators are amazed.

The narrative highlights Thecla's endurance; she has fulfilled the requirement for baptism set out by Paul earlier in the story, namely that she endure any trial, even if it could result in her death. Thecla's endurance is demonstrated physically, written on her body as tortures fail to bend her will. Thecla links her endurance and protection in the arena with the God who will raise her body to eternal or "deathless" life.

### *Paul and Thecla*

Thecla's story provides a valuable lens for understanding endurance. Thecla in her martyrdom, puts on display in her body the reality Paul is pointing to in Romans 8:17–23. Thecla opens our eyes to see new things in Romans 8. Thecla shows us the reality that the body is a place of communication—the body can speak. This story challenges our tendency to concentrate on doctrines as though they were disembodied realities to be only intellectually embraced. The resurrection of the body means that in the present, through exhibiting the virtue of endurance, the body can also speak about this hope. It not only can do so, but it should do so. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is made real in the here and now by the practice of the passive virtue of endurance.

Romans 8 stresses Paul's countercultural move of elevating endurance to a first order virtue. In Paul's day, cultural pressures pushed men away from a life of submissive suffering—of endurance—with a hollow promise of autonomy and power. Paul stood firm against such characterizations. Today our culture values similar things: individualism, consumerism, and celebrity—"me first, last, and always!"—are seen as the way and the truth and the "fulfilled" life. Paul points to Jesus, who himself is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). The gospel message invites each and every person to follow Christ. God's plan is not merely to save a believer's soul from hell once they die, but to raise them up, body and soul, to life in the new heavens and new earth. Even more, a new community called the church—the body of Christ—is growing to maturity, and in the end all creation will be made whole.

Sermon for April 9, 2017

## **"Letting Go of the Rope"**

Hebrews 2:14-15