# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 13

#### Thriving (Sanctified, Send and One)



There is an idea in the study of human nature known as a tipping point. My computer's built-in dictionary defines a tipping point as small changes resulting in larger, more significant dif-

Crushed (God help me)



We've all been there. Some call it that spot between a rock and a hard place where we feel the weight of life crushing us. Bad things will happen, the other shoe will drop, and our day of reckoning is near. And we're desperate for relief.

"God help me" is a typical response when confronted with such situations.

ferences. But, unfortunately, definitions fail to adequately convey the feeling it gives us.

By the way, we can reach a tipping point in either direction. In other words, small changes can make things much worse or better. So it depends on which way the momentum is headed. In this article, I'm focused on the good kind of tipping point.

Page 6

There are thousands of metaphors and illustrations that fit the occasion. And if you can't think of one, just tune into the latest reality show or news source. For example, my heart breaks every time I watch news coverage from Ukraine highlighting the massive destruction, suffering, and death caused by other humans.

But I don't have to look a thousand miles away to find distress. Every day I feel surrounded by desperation and despair. On better days, our community looks full of promise and potential. On other days I see only the suffering and the cries for help.

Page 2

#### November 13, 2022



EVERYONE HAVE A
WONDERFUL ANDSAFE WEEK!



#### Inside this issue:

Thriving	1
Crushed—God help me	1
In Our Prayers/Coming up this Week	3
Upcoming Worship Series — Pray	4
Pastor's Book Club	4
Leadership in Worship & Service	4
Upcoming Worship Series - Pray	5
Thriving	6
Life Group Questions & Notes	7
Feed Flint	8
Feed Flint	9
SFSK November Dates	10
Asbury Veggies Boxes	11
Pastor Book Club	12
Crushed—God help me	13

#### Crushed (God help me) ...cont from page 1

Pew Research discovered that most of us find meaning and purpose in our job. I'm blessed to be in this fortunate group. But I spend my days among many persons experiencing high levels of unemployment for whom purpose must be carved out of creative ingenuity.

Sadly, seventy percent of U.S. teenagers ages 13 to 17 report that anxiety and depression are significant problems among people their age in their community. Feeling overwhelmed is one of those places that feel like the pressure is more than we can bear.

As we near the end of our series on prayer, we're reminded that, for Jesus, prayer was an ongoing source of strength and grounding. His prayer habits kept Him in a continued Oneness with God that kept His human challenges from derailing His divine purpose.

How do I know this? First, Jesus followed Jewish practices of praying multiple times each day. Second, the gospel accounts share stories of Jesus finding time to pray even during a high-pressure day.

But the most apparent evidence for me is how Jesus treated others. He never condemned people that disagreed with Him. He wasn't cruel to people who judged or belittled Him. The strength it takes to speak love into the face of hate is beyond human capacity. But Jesus had divine power bolstering Him. Divine power fueled by a universe of energy.

The fifth prayer of Jesus that is this week's focus comes as He is praying shortly before His arrest.

Robert L. Morris, Jr.. in Pray Like Jesus, positions the Garden of Gethsemane as a metaphor. He writes:

Gethsemane was a place of business. You see. aeth in Hebrew (gat) means "press," and a press was a large five-foot-high square pillar made of stone. The word semane in Hebrew means "olive." So Gethsemane literally means press of olive, or as we would say today, an olive press...olives were gathered in a woven fishnet bag and placed on a special stone table with a trough on one side. Then the geth, or press, would be brought down on this bag of olives and left there, sometimes for two to three hours. It would take that long for the olives to be totally crushed and every drop of olive oil was funneled away.

The metaphor works when we consider that Jesus went to Gethsemane with a few of His followers on the evening He would be arrested. Knowing that His life on earth would soon come to a brutal end, Jesus and a few His followers spent the final hours together after supper.

During supper, Jesus told His followers what to expect and why. He also knew that they didn't grasp reality when they heard what He said. Nevertheless, they did and saw a lot together over the past couple of years, including numerous miracles. While Jesus was clearly different, they also experienced His humanness.

I fall short when I imagine what it would be like to face what Jesus faced. Sometimes it helps me to put my own worries into perspective. But, honestly, other times, it doesn't help any more than others telling me their problems. Neither gives me more strength to face my own challenges.

Sometimes, even when you have every reason to feel blessed, instead, you feel like you're one of a thousand olives placed between a stone table and the pressing stone. At such times you feel like every drop of what makes life enjoyable is oozing out from the weight of the trouble facing you.

Father, if you will take this cup of suffering away from Me, Not My will, however, but Your will be done.

Luke 22:42

Isn't it just like Jesus, when He felt crushed by the weight of an impending cross, when He felt crushed to the point of anguish, that He went to a place of crushing.

The gospel writers offer poetic descriptions of this time. Such as Jesus sweating blood as He prayed in anguish. His prayers didn't stop what was about to happen. Jesus would suffer intolerable cruelty. A sacrifice that should and can be avoided by love.

Jesus did this, so we no longer have to be crushed by dread and despair. It is not prayer that changes our circumstances. Instead, prayer prepares us to face our circumstances, knowing that God is in control and wants joy and abundance for each of us.

Page 13

Volume 2 Issue 13 Page 3

#### In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom Sylvia Pittman Shirley Craig

Richard Oram Chris Freeman



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

Nancy Elston

Elaine Lamoreaux

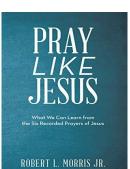
Norma Buzzard

#### **PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS**

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom, but we are also gathering in the Asbury Library Conference Room at 12Noon every Wednesday, unless otherwise noted.

Please call the Church Office for more information, as things could change (810-235-0016).

This book series is called, *Pray* 



like Jesus , written by Robert L. Morris, Jr. What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus.

Thank you and everyone continue to stay safe!

#### COMING UP THIS WEEK NOVEMBER 14 – NOVEMBER 20

Nov 14 Mon 6:00pm Worship Team

**Nov 15** Tues 10:00am-12:30pm

Food/Water Distribution

Nov 16 Wed 11am-12N Food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen (no appts needed)

12 Noon Pastor Book Club

Nov 17 Thu

Nov 18 Fri

Nov 19 Sat

Nov 20 Sun 10:30am

New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

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

## Upcoming Worship Series "Pray"



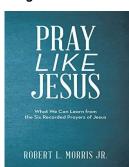
"Will you pray for me," the man asked his friend. "Of course," came the response. What else could his friend say? Prayer is so easy. It doesn't even have to be verbal. And prayer is so personal that no one knows if it even takes place.

But to whom will his friend pray and how will his friend go about praying? After all, nationally, we are a diverse group demographically and politically, and our religious beliefs vary.

Page 5

## Book Club News

Our worship series beginning in October focuses on



prayer and our book club selection that accompanies our series is titled *Pray Like Jesus*. This book.

written by Robert L. Morris, Jr., examines six prayers of Jesus, found in the Gospels, to help us

ic obspecs,

#### **Asbury Staff**

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor & Exec Dir Connie Portillo Office Manager Sulvia Pittman Empowerment Arts Jim Craig Board & Leadership Chair Kevin Croom Exec Chef & Dir Opers Matt DePalma Farms Manager Chris Freeman South Campus Bldg Mgr Israel Unger Finance Director Kim Sims Connections Supry Terrance Williams Arts Center Mgr Katelin Maylum Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods South Flint Soup Kitchen become more consistent prayers.

Prayer is probably the most talked-about subject in churches. However, not enough of us actually pray regularly. Rev. Morris believes that this is because we don't know enough about how to pray. The six prayers of Jesus can teach us how to grow our prayer life deeper and wider than ever before.

According to Amazon's description of our book selection:

Pray like Jesus is intended to be a simple

#### Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony, Mirium Anthony, Jim Jonathon, Terrance Mirium Cyndi Christine & Norma Welcome Team Ushers Production Team Children Worship Leader Cafe spiritual how-tomanual for those who do not have a vital prayer life but seek one. It is one intended to be an academic book as much as it is an epistle from a fellow believer who may have learned a few things in forty-one years of ministry. Author Robert L. Morris Jr. invites you to join him and look at six prayers of Jesus, but vou will intentionally not examine the Lord's Prayer in depth. The reason is simple: the Lord's Prayer contains valuable information on how disciples should pray, but this book is about how **Jesus** personally prayed.

Page 12

### Upcoming Worship Series - "Pray" ...cont from pg 4

As Christians, we believe that there is one God and we're likely to presume that praying means taking our petitions there. Yet we also believe that God lived among humanity and that we know God through Jesus Christ. And that God is ever-present through the Holy Spirit.

But according to a 2021 Pew Research Study, just under one-third of the U.S. population do not claim an affiliation with a particular religious group. Instead, they identify as atheist, agnostic, or simply respond "nothing in particular" when asked about their religious identify. And while the majority of U.S. resident self-identify as Christian, this percentage dropped 11 points over the past decade from 3/4 to less than a third.

Does this mean that prayer is a dying trend? The news is disturbing.

According to an article published in the *Christian Post based on the Pew Study, less than half of Americans pray daily. This is quite a contrast to the prayer habits of Jesus. As a Jew it's likely that Jesus prayed at least three times each day.* 

Doesn't it make sense that, as Christians, our prayer life would resemble that of our Savior, Jesus Christ? Of course.

Our new series, *Pray, examines the prayer life of Jesus by looking at each of the six actual prayers that we find in the Gospels. While there are numerous references of Jesus praying there are only six actual prayers preserved for our benefit.* 

Come learn how Eat, Pray, Love gets lived out when we try to emulate the prayer habits of Jesus.

Our series is based on a book written by the Reverend Dr. Robert L. Morris, Jr., a Presbyterian pastor for over 45 years. Our series will utilize his book titled *Pray Like Jesus as a guide. Be sure to get your copy before or after Sunday worship, or find a copy at your local library or favorite source for books. And join us at Book Club each Wednesday at Noon for further discussions on each Sunday's message.* 

Everyone is invited to submit prayer requests for each worship. Each prayer request will be dedicated during worship and be included in our prayers. Prayers requests can be submitted through the homepage of our website or filling out a prayer request form.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes on our *YouTube channel*. 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* at *FlintAsbury.org*.

**Pastor Tommy** 

Robert L. Morris, Jr.. Pray Like Jesus: What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus.. Bloomington, IL: Westbow Press, 2019.

How do we know when we've reached a tipping point?

Imagine you're climbing. You've headed up a steep incline where each step requires more and more energy. Finally, you reach a point where each step takes more energy than you feel you have. But about the time exhaustion has you convinced it's best to turn around, you feel a change in the amount of effort it takes for each step.

Suddenly you're not climbing. Instead, each step is effortless in comparison to your earlier experience. So you're not climbing, but you're also not coasting. And you're progressing at a faster pace than before. It feels like you're running, yet it's taking less energy.

What's different? Your bank account balance is the same or less. The challenges keeping you up at night are still there. So why aren't you worried? The nightly news describes a dangerous and violently divided world. So why aren't you panicked?

I'll tell you what's happening. You're no longer just surviving. You're thriving!

This week we continue with a prayer by Jesus on the night of His arrest. Last week we learned that Jesus prayed that His followers are guarded, guided, and unified. As His prayer continues, Jesus asks that His followers are sanctified, sent, and One with God. Finally, Jesus prays for His followers to thrive.

I call "sanctified" a fiftycent word. I say this because it isn't used in ordinary language and doesn't roll off the tongue. But sanctified is also one of those words where it's hard to find a substitute.

To be sanctified is to move towards a tipping point of eternal goodness and joy. Different translations choose other words for this process. For example, the Good News Translation uses "dedicated" instead. However, I'm not sure this makes it any easier to comprehend.

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 as you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

John 17:17-18

The New Living Translation version translates this part of Jesus' prayer request as making us holy. While holy may be a more common word, it still leaves us wondering what this looks like when the process is complete.

What will life be like if we are sanctified, dedicated, and holy? Will we all be

wearing white robes and strumming harps? Or will we simply be a little more pleasant to be around?

In Christian theology, sanctification is an example of divine grace. Which means that we don't earn sanctification. Because it is a free gift from a God who wants the very best for us, sanctification is available to everyone. We simply need to accept it, take it in, and allow it to do what is required to move us to the holy tipping point where everything changes. That place where each step is easier than before.

One way to think of divine grace is to break it down into three types. First, before sanctification begins, we know God as a result of prevenient grace. Think of it as God reaching out to us. But less like a telemarketer or spam and more like a wake-up call for something we don't want to miss. We may initially feel annoyed if we're sound asleep, but we're grateful that we won't miss out.

Wait! What I wrote doesn't do justice to prevenient grace. Remember, the God who created everything thinks enough about you and your well-being to reach out. Let that sink in for a moment.

Page 15

Volume 2 Issue 13 Page 7

Life Group Questions & Notes:		
Then Jesus went off from them about the dista prayed. "Father," He said, "if You will, take this cu however, but Your will be done."		
nowever, but rour will be done.	Luke 22:39-46 (GNT)	
NOTES FROM WORSHIP		
QUESTIONS FOR	R LIFE GROUPS	
1. Read Jesus' prayer said in the Garden of Gethsemane in Luke 22:39-46. Are you able to place yourself in a similar situation where you feel crushed? What did you learn from your reading that surprised you? What confused you?		
2. Read this week's article titled Crushed. Share a world crushing you? What helped? What didn't he that were helpful? How did prayer enter into how y have you had with answered prayer? What about	lp? What are some things that others did or said ou handled your situation? What experiences	
3. How can the members of your group help you receptive to hearing and understanding the Word Spirit bless you with more courage.		





Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting: flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate



**NOVEMBER 2ND & 16TH** (THANKSGIVING FOOD **GIVEAWAY 16TH), 11AM-NOON** 

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED FOR **FOOD EVER!** 

ANGEL CLOSET:

**NOVEMBER 9TH. 23RD. AND 30TH** 

APPOINTMENT REQUIRED!



3410 FENTON ROAD **3 BLOCKS NORTH OF ATHERTON ROAD** FLINT. MI 48507 CALL 810-239-3427 FOR AN ANGEL CLOSET **APPOINTMENT OR QUESTIONS** 



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Select what goes in your box from each week's harvest. Get \$5 off your next order when you fill your box with \$15 of produce.

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Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.

\* CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN \*

The Reverend Dr. Robert L. Morris Jr. has served in various ministerial positions for more than forty-five years. This includes serving as senior minister at First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Florida, for over seventeen years. Rev. Morris has since returned to Young Life staff, where his ministry began.

He is on the board of the Salvation Army and an organizing board member of First Ministries, a nonprofit serving the poor and homeless in Jacksonville. Rev. Morris is also a former board member of Habitat for Humanity in both Jacksonville and North Carolina.

I invite you to join us each Sunday for worship as we explore the six prayers of Jesus and consider how to improve our prayer life. Each Wednesday, we'll dig deeper into the wisdom offered by our book selection. You can pickup a copy of the book when you attend worship.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away, I encourage you to join us via Zoom 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, delighted when new people 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 — <u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.

**Pastor Tommy** 

Robert L. Morris, Jr.. Pray Like Jesus: What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus.. Bloomington, IL: Westbow Press, 2019.

#### Crushed (God help me) ...cont from page 2

Sometimes we're blessed to experience God's miraculous power in response to prayer. Other times, it happens without our awareness. Usually, God's will differs from our own, and we cannot see where our future leads.

Only God bears the burden of foresight.

Each Sunday during our series, *Pray*, we're collecting prayer requests. You can submit a request online from our website **home page**. In addition, prayer request forms are located around the church and during water and food giveaways.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our *website's* homepage - *Click here to watch*. This button takes you to our *YouTube channel*. You can find more information about us on our website at *FlintAsbury.org*.

A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to connect@FlintAsbury.org or let us know when you send a message through our website. We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose Newsletters.

**Pastor Tommy** 

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Patrick van Kessel . "How Americans feel about the satisfactions and stresses of modern life." © Pew Research Center, Feb 5, 2020. Retrieved from: <a href="Iink">Iink</a>



Coming soon, the farm's new twist on a CSA Food Box!!!!

Bring home only the veggies you love!

First Pick-Up Date: Saturday, July 16th, 11am-1pm and until further notice. We will post if anything changes.



Want more information?? Email: kelly.jewett@outlook.com



We were stoked to be kicking off our very first Asbury Farms Sliding Scale Food Box Program last week! Get the most local, organic, delicious produce!! Grown on the East Side!

Pick what veggies you want, how much you want and pay what you can between \$12.00 — \$24.00.

Every Saturday from 11:00am to 1:00pm 1601 Jane Ave Flint MI

ASBURY FARMS

Look for the big banner that says "SALE" ...

The second stage of grace comes after we notice God wants us to know God better. Perhaps we make a point of attending church. Some of us may even join a Bible study group while others simply spend more time talking to God. There are as many ways to get to this next step as there are people. And speaking of people, someone else almost always says or does something that seems to trigger our awareness.

And if we stay tuned in to God's nudging, we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior through justifying grace. This idea comes out of scripture and can be confusing. Remember that holiness is a destination we move towards, but God accepts us just as we are. God put justifying grace on display by living among humans in the person of Jesus Christ to make sure that we seriously consider God's offer of grace.

The impact of prevenient and justifying grace is often described as repentance or as a change of direction. Decades ago, I wrote a poem about my own experience. Here's what it was like for me:

What do you feel when you hear Church bells?

Is it a sound that signals hope?

Like the lost seaman hearing the lighthouse horn, it sings comfort to my soul.

But an alarm also

But an alarm also sounded, time to change course before my journey ends.

But why? Why in the world and beyond would God put so much effort into

saving folks like me who don't show any indication that they want or need saving? In a word, love.

Who hasn't seen the reminder? It appears on bill-boards, tattoos, and stadium jumbotrons. According to John 3:16, God loved the world enough to save us. And God's love is so complete that we're given a choice as to whether to return God's love.

If you think about this seriously, this idea will resonate with you. There is love, and there is the degree of love that offers freedom to the beloved as to whether they choose to return our love. Humans didn't invent love. We each discover love through divine grace.

And this is where we begin to change. At least, this is what it looks like to observers. The truth is that we're not really changing as much as we're shedding layers of baggage that we've accumulated. As a result, we start becoming the person God created us to be rather than the person the world shaped us into.

Can you see now how sanctifying grace can seem like work for a while, but as we discard unnecessary weight, our steps eventually get easier?

Divine grace is inseparable from divine patience. Even the most faithful followers wander to and fro instead of staying tuned into the Holy Spirit.

Robert Morris writes,
"That's where the disciples
were at this time in their lives;

they were connected to Christ—but not altered." So we know that some of His followers were saying the right words, but they still held onto human ideas about God's love.

The world uses conflict to sway opinion. Whether through negative comments on social media, harsh words in conversations, or worse. We allow anger to bubble up and out. And frankly, it often looks like the most offensive get the gold. But their rewards are both temporary and unsatisfying. We never find peace in unkindness and aggression.

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