

St. David's Wednesday Lenten Program, March 18, 2020 (Kathy Love)

When I was young, the world seemed a complicated, bewildering place. I could not understand how grown ups knew so much because I was sure that I never would. Once I could read, I longed for a guide book to help me know what I was supposed to do and say. Where were "the Rules" written down?

Prayer was what we did before we ate, when we went to bed, in church and Sunday school. At home, it was usually words we had memorized. (God is great, God is good. Let us thank Him for this food.) It was part of the routine and it was comfortable, but we probably did not understand the importance of what we were doing. I grew up in a Baptist church and they were very big on memorizing Bible verses. Again, at the time, I do not know how meaningful it was to my 7- to 10-year old self. Over the years as I grew to understand the words better they became like old friends. I was glad to encounter them.

As the oldest of four girls, I was surrounded by younger children—sisters, cousins, neighbors, and friends. I discovered a rapport with children that enabled me to get along well with them. Being able to distract a sister or cousin turned out to be a big help to my mother or my aunt. I felt like a "helper". By the time I was 11-years-old, I was doing some babysitting and helping in the Nursery at church.

I did not question going to church. It was normal. My family, my relatives, my friends all attended churches (or temple.) I could not imagine NOT going to church. Although during high school and college I learned that not all families practiced this, for me it was important. Once David, a cradle Episcopalian, and I married and had children, we chose to raise our children in the Episcopal church.

At The Episcopal Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Lexington, Kentucky, I had my first experience teaching young children in Sunday school. My next opportunity came here at St. David's. Now I was the teacher, not the student. I felt a great responsibility to prepare and get a good grasp on my beliefs before trying to explain each lesson to the class. I began to listen more closely to the words I was praying and the message of the sermons. As it turns out, I actually still was the student. I learned so much about God, the Bible, and prayer by trying to make sense of the lessons and give them back to the children in an easy-to-understand way.

"Make me ever mindful and responsive to the needs of others" had been part of my daily prayer for a long time. I began to see more and more how God had answered that prayer for me. I was making contributions at St. David's—working with the children, preparing food for the Men's shelter, Habitat for Humanity volunteers, and Pastoral Care, arranging flowers for the church services and getting a small Flower Guild operating. Also, I volunteered for the Welcome Baby program for Chesterfield County and organized neighborhood "Christmas adoptions" for children living in the HomeAgain shelter.

I never expected to do any of those things but knowing that God is Love and talking to Him through prayer helped me to see how God actually was working in my life. All along, in my head I believed in God, worshiped God, prayed and went to church, but I was looking at it as what I

had to do to live my faith. I had not recognized that God was always actively there guiding me, giving me talents to use to His glory, putting people in my life to teach me to be the person that He wants me to be, loving me.

One of the Bible passages I had memorized as a child was 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13. Here, Paul tells us what love is really like. This is a very popular passage and I have heard it many times over the years. Its beauty, straight forwardness, simplicity and relevance always amaze me. And, 1 John 4:8 says, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” Or, as Bishop Curry says, “If it is not about love, it is not about God.”

One of our favorite Godly Play stories is “The Ten Best Ways to Live.” “Moses climbed the holy mountain and stayed there talking with God. And God told Moses the Ten Best Ways to Live...There were four best ways for loving God...And there were six best ways for loving people.’

Love God.

Love people.

I find when I remember those two “rules” I am better able to focus on what God would have me do. I do not always get it right or say the right thing or think of the right thing to do in a timely manner. But I am certain that if I talk to God and ask for guidance about a situation, He will show me the way through it. I know because He has done it in my life over and over. As long as I remember “the rules” (or “commandments” or “the Ten Best Ways to Live”), as long as I remember to love God and love others I know that I am doing what He would have me do.