

Thinking more of God



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

February 18, 2018

Discussion Guide

WHAT? ME WORRY?

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- DO YOU EVER GET ANXIOUS? WHAT IS THIS FEELING LIKE FOR YOU?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, TALK ABOUT WHAT HUMILITY IS AND USING THE NOTES, TALK ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF ANXIETY IN AMERICA TODAY.
- READ MATTHEW 6.25-34 ALOUD. SEEK TO IMAGINE YOURSELF AMONG THE CROWD LISTENING TO JESUS. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE.
- WHAT REASONS DOES JESUS PROVIDE FOR REJECTING

ANXIETY? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.

- WHAT ADDITIONAL REASONS, IF ANY, MIGHT WE ADD TO JESUS' OWN?
- EVEN IF PEOPLE ACCEPT JESUS' REASONING, DO YOU THINK THEY FIND IT EASY TO STOP BEING ANXIOUS? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- ABOUT WHAT THINGS DO PEOPLE BECOME ANXIOUS? WHAT IS IT ABOUT THESE THINGS WHICH BRINGS ABOUT THEIR ANXIETY?
- ABOUT WHAT THINGS DO YOU BECOME ANXIOUS? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- JESUS STATES THAT THE SOLUTION TO ANXIETY IS A WHOLE-HEARTED PURSUIT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. IF THE PHYSICAL EXPRESSION OF GOD'S INAUGURATED KINGDOM IS THE CHURCH, HOW MIGHT THIS PROVIDE A SOLUTION TO ANXIETY? WHAT MIGHT THIS PURSUIT LOOK LIKE IN YOUR CONTEXT?
- CONSIDER CLOSING BY SHARING ONCE MORE THOSE THINGS WHICH MAKE YOU ANXIOUS. PRAY OVER ONE ANOTHER, OFFERING THESE TO GOD. YOU MIGHT CONSIDER BLESSING OR ANOINTING THOSE OVER WHOM YOU PRAY. IN YOUR PRAYERS, SEEK GOD'S LEADING IN WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, THE GROUP OR LARGER CHURCH MIGHT HAVE IN ADDRESSING THE ISSUES RAISED.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

ANXIETY IN AMERICA

ANXIETY IS THE UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE OF MENTAL AND PHYSICAL DISTRESS IN RELATIONSHIP TO A PERCEIVED OR ANTICIPATED THREAT.

ANXIETY CAN LEAD TO A SENSE OF ALARM OR TENSION, AND RESULT IN FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT FEELINGS AND ACTIONS. UNLIKE FEAR WHICH FOCUSES ON REAL AND PRESENT THREATS, ANXIETY FOCUSES ON NON-EXISTENT DANGERS IN THE FUTURE AND DWELLS ON HOW TO REDUCE THEM. WHILE ALL PEOPLE EXPERIENCE ANXIETY, STATISTICALLY, AMERICANS EXPERIENCE MORE ANXIETY THAN ANY OTHER NATION IN THE WORLD. ALMOST 40 MILLION AMERICANS A YEAR ARE DIAGNOSED WITH FORMAL ANXIETY DISORDERS MAKING IT THE MOST COMMON FORM OF MENTAL ILLNESS IN AMERICA TODAY COSTING ROUGHLY \$300 BILLION A YEAR IN MEDICAL COSTS AND LOST PRODUCTIVITY. THIS REALITY HAS LED SOME TO USE THE TITLE OF W.H. AUDEN'S 1947 POEM TO LABEL THE STATE IN AMERICA AS THE "AGE OF ANXIETY."

NOT ONLY IS ANXIETY ON THE RISE IN AMERICA, BUT PERSONAL STRESS AND TENSION, PRECURSORS TO ANXIETY, ARE ALSO ON THE RISE. IN A 2017 STUDY, THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION FOUND THAT OVER 50% OF AMERICANS BELIEVE THEY ARE EXPERIENCING THE WORST PERIOD IN AMERICAN HISTORY. PSYCHOLOGIST ROBERT LEAHY SAID, "THE AVERAGE HIGH SCHOOL KID [TODAY] HAS THE SAME LEVEL OF ANXIETY AS THE AVERAGE PSYCHIATRIC PATIENT IN THE EARLY 1950'S."

WHILE THE EXPERIENCE OF ANXIETY AND ITS COGNATE DISORDERS OF DEPRESSION, CUTTING, STRESS, AND TENSION ARE ON THE RISE, AMERICANS ARE HARD PUT TO POINT TO REASONS FOR THEIR ANXIOUS STATE. UNLIKE OTHER NATIONS TODAY, WE ARE NOT FACING CIVIL-WAR, ECONOMIC COLLAPSE, NATIONAL DISASTER, OR INVASION. YET ANXIETY IS AT ITS HIGHEST LEVEL AND RISING. IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY, JOURNALISTS AND AUTHORS OFTEN POINTED TO THE EXISTENCE OF A POOR JOB MARKET AS THE UNDERLYING CAUSE FOR RISING ANXIETY LEVELS IN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS. HOWEVER, RECENT RESEARCH HAS DEBUNKED THIS AS A SHALLOW INTERPRETATION OF REALITY. MORE RECENTLY, FOUR INTERLACING FACTORS HAVE BEEN OFFERED AS THE UNDERLYING CAUSES FOR THE RISING ANXIOUS SPIRIT IN AMERICA. FIRST, PSYCHOLOGISTS NOTE THAT THE 21ST CENTURY IS AN AGE OF UNCERTAINTY. PRESENT DAY AMERICANS LIVE IN A POST-9/11 WORLD MARKED BY ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL INSECURITY. TERRORISM, SCHOOL SHOOTINGS, AND ECONOMIC RECESSIONS ARE STILL FRESH IN EVERY AMERICAN'S PSYCHE. SECOND, FOLLOWING THE WORK OF ROBERT PUTNAM'S *BOWLING ALONE*, PSYCHOLOGISTS POINT TO A GROWING LOSS OF COMMUNITY BONDS WHICH DEPRIVE PEOPLE OF A COMPETENT SOCIAL NETWORK. WITHOUT THESE NETWORKS, PEOPLE ARE LEFT WITHOUT A SUPPORT STRUCTURE TO HELP THEM NAVIGATE TIMES OF DISTRESS. THIRD, SOME THEORIZE THAT THE CONSTANT BARRAGE OF NEGATIVE NEWS IS WEARING UPON THE AMERICAN PSYCHE. TECHNOLOGY HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE ACCESS TO

A CONSTANT NEWS FEED, WHICH NEWS OUTLETS FILL WITH REPORTS OF THE LATEST BOMBING, ATTACK, GRISLY MURDER, AND PARTISAN POLITICAL TWEET OR MANEUVERING. FINALLY, SOME PSYCHOLOGISTS POINT TO A GROWING INTOLERANCE OF PAIN AMONG AMERICANS AS A FACTOR. THE REASONING IS THAT AMERICANS HAVE COME TO A POINT THAT THEY BELIEVE LIFE IS SUPPOSED TO FEEL GOOD AND WHEN IT DOES NOT THEY VILIFY THEIR EXPERIENCE OF PAIN AND STRIVE TO RETURN TO A SENSATION OF CALM AND GOODNESS. IT IS THIS STRIVING, WHICH IN MANY ACCOUNTS PROVES FRUITLESS, WHICH GIVES RISE TO THE EVER-GROWING RISE OF ANXIETY.

JUST AS THE SOURCES OF AMERICAN ANXIETY ARE COMPLEX, SO TOO ARE THE SOLUTIONS. TURNING AWAY FROM ANXIETY IS NOT A MATTER OF THE WILL. MANY FIND THAT THEIR ANXIETY CAN BE TRIGGERED EASILY EVEN WHEN EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO NOT BE ANXIOUS. LIKEWISE, MEDICINE AND COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY ARE NOT FULLY EFFECTIVE IN COMPLETELY REDUCING HIGH LEVELS OF ANXIETY. IT IS IN THIS SETTING WHICH JESUS' WORDS REGARDING ANXIETY ARE MOST IMPORTANT (MATTHEW 6.25-34). ANXIETY IS NOT THE NATURAL STATE OF PEOPLE, SOMETHING WHICH CAN BE AVOIDED. HOWEVER, REDUCING ANXIETY REQUIRES THE INTENTIONAL PURSUIT OF A DIFFERENT SET OF PRIORITIES, PRIORITIES RELATED TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS IT IS EXPRESSED AS THE CHURCH. PERHAPS THE MODERN ANXIOUS AMERICAN MIND IS ANXIOUS BECAUSE IT IS STRIVING TO PROTECT AND MAINTAIN A WAY OF LIFE WHICH THE PRESENT STATE OF WORLD-WIDE UNCERTAINTY AND NEWS FEEDS WARN IS COLLAPSING. HOWEVER, IN PURSUING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS EXPRESSED IN THE CHURCH, ONE DOES NOT SEEK TO PROP UP A WAY OF BEING BUT PURSUES A NEW WAY OF BEING, AND SHE DISCOVERS A COMMUNITY NETWORK AND REORIENTATION TO THE EXPERIENCE OF PAIN WHICH SUPPORTS HER AS SHE SEEKS TO NAVIGATE LIFE. IT IS IN THIS SCENARIO THAT ANXIETY CAN CEASE TO BE A STATE OF BEING FOR BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITIES.

THE TEXT

MATTHEW 6.25-34: *DON'T WORRY*

THE EXPERIENCE OF ANXIETY IS UNIVERSAL. IT IS THEREFORE NOT SURPRISING THAT JESUS ADDRESSES THIS STATE IN HIS SERMON ON THE MOUNT, JESUS' EXPLANATION OF HOW THOSE WHO MAKE UP GOD'S KINGDOM ON EARTH ARE TO LIVE AND NAVIGATE THE WORLD. THE CONTEXT FOR JESUS' STATEMENTS ABOUT ANXIETY IS HIS DISCUSSION OF THE PURSUIT OF MONEY VERSUS THE PURSUIT OF GOD. IN BOTH THE ANCIENT AND MODERN WORLD, MONEY PROVIDES A SENSE OF SECURITY AND POWER LEADING PEOPLE TO PURSUE IT AS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE. JESUS ARGUES THAT KINGDOM CITIZENS DO NOT AVOID MONEY BUT THEY DO NOT PURSUE IT AS SOMETHING OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE. RATHER, CITIZENS OF GOD'S KINGDOM PURSUE GOD AS

THAT WHICH MATTERS MOST. THIS LEAVES THE ANCIENT AND MODERN AUDIENCE ASKING HOW THEY ARE TO NAVIGATE THE WORLD. MONEY PROVIDES ACCESS TO NEEDED GOODS AND SERVICES WHICH SUSTAIN LIFE. IF ONE DOES NOT PURSUE MONEY THEN HOW WILL ONE OBTAIN WHAT THEY NEED IN THE WORLD. IT IS THIS LINE OF THOUGHT THAT LEADS TO JESUS' DISCUSSION OF ANXIETY.

JESUS HAS ALREADY ASSURED HIS FOLLOWERS THAT IF THEY WOULD PRAY AND ASK FOR WHAT THEY NEEDED DAILY, GOD WOULD PROVIDE (MATTHEW 6.11). HOWEVER, ANXIETY IS NOT ADDRESSED IN HAVING WHAT ONE NEEDS FOR TODAY. ANXIETY IS FOCUSED ON WHAT ONE NEEDS FOR TOMORROW, THAT WHICH GOD HAS NOT YET PROVIDED. MONEY AND ITS PURSUIT GAVE AN ANSWER THIS ANXIETY. IF ONE HAD MONEY THEY COULD AFFORD WHAT THEY NEEDED IN THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, JESUS' AUDIENCE IS NOT MADE UP OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE MONEY. THEY DESIRE MONEY, BUT THEY ARE THE POOR OF THE LAND. THEIR PHYSICAL NEEDS FOR THE BASICS OF LIFE SUCH AS FOOD, CLOTHING, AND SHELTER ARE NOT IMAGINED BUT PART OF THEIR DAILY EXPERIENCE. JESUS ENCOURAGES THESE FOLLOWERS TO PURSUE GOD AND IN THIS PURSUIT ANXIETY SHOULD BE AVOIDED. JESUS ARGUES THAT BEING ANXIOUS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE NEEDS WAS POINTLESS BECAUSE IT WAS INEFFECTIVE IN PROVIDING (MATTHEW 6.27), THE KINGDOM LIFE WAS ABOUT MORE THAN THE BASIC NEEDS OF LIFE (MATTHEW 6.25), AND EACH DAY WAS DIFFICULT ENOUGH WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT THE NEXT (MATTHEW 6.34). WHILE THESE ARE TRUE, KNOWING THESE TRUTHS DOES LITTLE TO REDUCE THE FEELING OF ANXIETY IF ONE IS FACING VERY REAL NEEDS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THEREFORE, JESUS DIGS DEEPER INTO ANXIETY'S CAUSES AND ITS REMEDY.

ACCORDING TO JESUS, ANXIETY STEMS FROM A FALSE ASSUMPTION THAT PEOPLE MUST PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES. JESUS POINTS TO THE BIRDS AND NOTES THAT THE BIRDS TAKE NO THOUGHT OF WORKING TO PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES BY PLATING, REAPING, OR STORING AWAY IN BARN. IN SPITE OF THIS LACK OF INDUSTRY, GOD PROVIDES FOR THEM AND PEOPLE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN BIRDS. SO, IT REASONS THAT GOD WILL PROVIDE FOR PEOPLE. WITH THIS, JESUS IS NOT ENCOURAGING A PASSIVE APPROACH TO LIFE. JESUS ASSUMES PEOPLE WILL CONTINUE TO LABOR: SOWING, REAPING, AND STORING AWAY IN BARN. WHAT JESUS CLAIMS IS THAT GOD WILL PROVIDE FOR PEOPLE THROUGH THEIR LABOR BECAUSE HE VIEWS THEM AS IMPORTANT.

JESUS NEXT POINTS TO FLOWERS AND GRASS IN THE FIELDS SURROUNDING THE CROWDS. WHILE PEASANTS OFTEN USED THESE PLANTS AS TENDER FOR THEIR BREAD OVENS, JESUS NOTES THAT GOD RICHLY CLOTHED THESE PLANTS. HE REASONS THAT IF GOD IS WILLING TO SO CLOTHE PLANTS THAT ARE USED TO FIRE BREAD OVENS THEN HE WOULD BE MUCH MORE WILLING TO CLOTHE PEOPLE. ACCORDING

TO JESUS, ANXIETY OVER THE BASIC NEEDS OF LIFE ARISE WHEN ONE BEHAVES LIKE A PAGAN; THAT IS, PEOPLE ARE ANXIOUS WHEN GOD IS NOT PRESENT IN THEIR LIFE. IF GOD IS PRESENT, THEN JESUS REASONS THAT ONE CAN TRUST THIS GOOD GOD TO PROVIDE BECAUSE HE KNOWS WHAT PEOPLE NEED AND IS WILLING TO GIVE IT.

WHILE JESUS HAS PLACED HIS FINGER ON THE CAUSE OF ANXIETY, SEEKING TO LIVE LIFE WITHOUT GOD (A LACK OF HUMILITY OR PRESENCE OF PRIDE), HE HAS NOT YET OFFERED A SOLUTION, SOMETHING HE DOES BEFORE HE MOVES TO HIS NEXT TOPIC. ACCORDING TO JESUS, THE SOLUTION TO ANXIETY RESTS IN THE SINGLE-MINDED PURSUIT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS BECAUSE SUCH WOULD LEAD TO THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PROVISION. INTERPRETERS WHO IDENTIFY GOD'S KINGDOM AS A FUTURE SPIRITUAL REALITY STRUGGLE TO INTERPRET JESUS' WORDS BECAUSE HIS SOLUTION OFFERS NO PRACTICAL HELP FOR THOSE WHO ARE FACING REAL FUTURE STRUGGLES. HOWEVER, IF ONE INTERPRETS JESUS' WORDS ABOUT THE PURSUIT OF THE KINGDOM AS A PRESENT PHYSICAL REALITY (THE CHURCH) THEN JESUS' WORDS MAKE SENSE AND FIND SUPPORT IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

IF IN HIS ENCOURAGEMENT TO PURSUE THE KINGDOM JESUS IS POINTING HIS FOLLOWERS TO THE PURSUIT OF THE PHYSICAL EXPRESSION OF THE KINGDOM AS THE CHURCH THEN HE IS PROVIDING A REAL AND PRESENT SOLUTION TO ANXIETY. JESUS IS STATING THAT IF ONE WILL PURSUE THE LIFE OF THE KINGDOM IN THE COMMUNITY OF GOD WHICH IS PURSUING GOD'S RIGHT LIFE TOGETHER (RIGHTEOUSNESS) THEY WILL EXPERIENCE GOD'S PROVISION OF EVERY NEED. THEREFORE, THERE IS NO NEED TO BE ANXIOUS. THIS ACTUALLY PROVED TO BE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE EARLY CHURCH. AS THEY PURSUED LIFE TOGETHER, GOD PROVIDED SO THAT EVERY BELIEVER HAD THEIR NEEDS MET BY THOSE IN THEIR IMMEDIATE CONGREGATION OR BY BELIEVERS FROM OTHER CONGREGATIONS (ACTS 2.42-47; 5.32-37; 11.27-30).

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

I STRUGGLE WITH ANXIETY. I SUPPOSE, LIKE MOST PEOPLE, I ALWAYS HAVE EXPERIENCED ANXIETY TO ONE DEGREE OR ANOTHER. HOWEVER, IT WAS IN SEMINARY THAT MY ANXIETY KICKED UP A NOTCH OR TEN! ONE NIGHT WHILE DRYING THE DISHES I EXPERIENCED AN ANXIETY ATTACK AND ENDED UP IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM THINKING I WAS HAVING A HEART ATTACK. IN THE SUBSEQUENT YEARS I HAVE STRUGGLED WITH MY STOMACH, FEELINGS OF DREAD, AND THE OCCASIONAL TIGHTNESS OF MY CHEST AND SHORTNESS OF BREATH WHICH I HAVE COME TO IDENTIFY AS MINI-PANIC ATTACKS. I PROBABLY HAVE TWO TO FOUR OF THESE EXPERIENCES A WEEK IN SPITE OF MY BEST EFFORTS TO AVOID THEM. THE SMALLEST THING CAN SET ONE OFF. I CAN BE WRESTLING WITH A THORNY SERMON ISSUE AND IT WILL BRING ON A SMALL PANIC ATTACK. I CAN HAVE A HARD MEETING WITH SOMEONE AND LATER THAT DAY I

CAN ALMOST BET I WILL FIND MYSELF MORE THAN A LITTLE ANXIOUS.

THE DILEMMA I FIND WITH MY STRUGGLE WITH ANXIETY IS THAT I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TAUGHT THAT ANXIETY IS A SIN, PRACTICAL ATHEISM SOME HAVE CALLED IT. I SUPPOSE THERE IS TRUTH TO THIS BUT STOPPING MY ANXIETY HAS NEVER BEEN EASY, A MATTER OF MY WILL. I JUST GET ANXIOUS. A GOOD BIT OF THIS HAS TO DO WITH MY EXPERIENCE IN MY FAMILY OF ORIGIN AND IS TIED TO FEELINGS OF REJECTION AND THE EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE, BUT I HAVE LONG SINCE LEFT THAT EXPERIENCE, AND MY ANXIETY HAS STAYED. I HAVE FOUND LITTLE HELP UNTIL I BEGAN TO SERIOUSLY PONDER THE WORDS OF JESUS ABOUT ANXIETY.

IF I READ JESUS CORRECTLY HERE, AND I THINK I DO, THEN GOD DOESN'T WANT US TO BE ANXIOUS. HE WANTS US TO REST IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE CARES AND WILL CARE FOR US. HOWEVER, IF I READ JESUS RIGHTLY, WE BECOME ANXIOUS NOT JUST IF WE FORGET THIS BUT IF WE LIVE AS IF THERE IS NO GOD AT ALL. THAT'S RIGHT. WE BECOME ANXIOUS NOT IF WE STOP BELIEVING THAT GOD WILL CARE FOR US BUT IF WE STOP LIVING LIKE THERE IS A GOD AT ALL. IN OTHER WORDS, WHEN WE START LIVING LIKE WE ARE GOD AND ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYTHING, WE CAN BE SURE TO GET ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH ANXIETY. WHEN I THINK ABOUT MY OWN ANXIETY, I SEE HOW THIS PLAYS OUT IN MY OWN LIFE. I GET ANXIOUS ABOUT MY SERMON BECAUSE I THINK I HAVE TO FIGURE IT OUT. I GET ANXIOUS ABOUT HARD MEETINGS BECAUSE I THINK I HAVE TO CONTROL HOW PEOPLE RESPOND AND WHAT THEY DO. I GET ANXIOUS BECAUSE I THINK I HAVE TO BE GOD, BY DEFINITION PRIDE. THE PROBLEM WITH BEING GOD IS I AM NOT VERY GOOD AT IT BECAUSE I HAVE VERY LITTLE CONTROL OVER MYSELF MUCH LESS ANYBODY OR ANYTHING ELSE IN MY WORLD. SO, STOP PLAYING GOD AND I CAN STOP BEING ANXIOUS. THAT SOUNDS EASIER THAN IT IS, BUT JESUS PROVIDES A SOLUTION.

JESUS STATES THAT IF I WILL PURSUE HIS KINGDOM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS I CAN STOP PLAYING GOD. FOR A LONG WHILE THIS STATEMENT HAS BAFLED ME UNTIL I BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT JESUS WAS NOT CALLING ME TO SOME PIE-IN-THE-SKY KINGDOM. JESUS WAS CALLING ME TO PURSUE A REAL AND PRESENT KINGDOM, THE INAUGURATED AND PHYSICAL EXPRESSION OF THE KINGDOM CALLED THE CHURCH. WHEN I PURSUE THE CHURCH, I AM PURSUING MORE THAN ATTENDING A BUILDING OR A WORSHIP EVENT. I AM PURSUING A WAY OF LIFE WITH OTHERS. I AM PURSUING LIFE UNDER THE REIGN OF KING JESUS. I AM NOT JUST ACKNOWLEDGING HIM BUT SEEKING TO LIVE MY LIFE ON HIS TERMS (HUMILITY) AND DEPENDING UPON HIM TO CARE FOR ME. WHEN I LIVE THIS WAY, GOD PROMISES TO PROVIDE LIKE ANY GOOD KING. WHAT I HAVE FOUND AND AM FINDING IS THAT THIS IS TRUE. GOD DOES PROVIDE, THROUGH HIS PEOPLE. SOMEHOW BEING PART OF THE KINGDOM OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE CHURCH PROVIDES ME WITH WHAT I NEED, NOT JUST IN THE PRESENT BUT IN THE FUTURE WHATEVER THAT FUTURE WINDS UP BEING. GOD'S PEOPLE COME ALONGSIDE AND

AFFIRM ME, LOVE ME, FEED ME, AND CLOTHE ME. I AM RICHLY BLESSED AND PROVIDED FOR BUT NOT BECAUSE I WORKED HARD FOR IT ON MY OWN. I AM RICHLY BLESSED AND PROVIDED FOR BECAUSE I AM PART OF GOD'S KINGDOM, THE CHURCH, AND GOD PROVIDES FOR THOSE IN HIS KINGDOM.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

WE ALL EXPERIENCE ANXIETY, SOME OF US AT DEBILITATING LEVELS. WHO DOESN'T KNOW THE FEELING OF IMPENDING DOOM OVER WHAT MIGHT BE? WE ALL KNOW ANXIETY. WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW IS HOW TO BE FREE OF IT. ACCORDING TO JESUS, WE SUFFER FROM ANXIETY BECAUSE WE PLAY AT BEING GOD. WE BELIEVE WE ARE ON OUR OWN IN LIFE (PRIDE). HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT REALITY. IF WE WANT TO BE FREE FROM ANXIETY, WE MUST LOCATE OURSELVES WITHIN REALITY, AND WE DO THIS WHEN WE LOCATE OURSELVES FIRMLY WITHIN THE CHURCH. TO PURSUE LIFE WITHIN THE CHURCH IS TO PURSUE LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. AS THE CHURCH WE HUMBLE OURSELVES UNDER THE REIGN OF KING JESUS AND SEEK TO LIVE TOGETHER THE LIFE HE DESIRES. WHEN THIS HAPPENS ALL REASONS FOR ANXIETY FADE BECAUSE WE DISCOVER GOD MEETS OUR NEEDS, OFTEN THROUGH ONE ANOTHER. IF YOU SUFFER FROM ANXIETY, THE GREATEST STEP YOU CAN TAKE IS TOWARDS THE CHURCH. TAKING A STEP TOWARD THE CHURCH IS ABOUT MORE THAN ATTENDING A WORSHIP SERVICE OR VIEWING A SERMON ONLINE. STEPPING TOWARD THE CHURCH INVOLVES STEPPING INTO THE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH. IT IS TO SHARE YOUR LIFE, MEALS, AND SO MUCH MORE AS YOU PURSUE GOD'S INTENDED LIFE TOGETHER WITH OTHERS. IN THIS, WE STOP WORRYING ABOUT NEEDING TO PROP UP OLD SYSTEMS OR WAYS OF BEING AND DISCOVER THAT THROUGH GOD'S PEOPLE WE FIND WHAT WE NEED. IF YOU NEED TO TAKE A STEP TOWARD THE CHURCH, WE INVITE YOU TO TALK WITH US ABOUT WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE.



SENIOR
PASTOR
BLAKE
SHIPP

 twitter.com/blake_shipp

©2018 UNION CENTER CHRISTIAN CHURCH