

Love and Live for the Word in 2020

“Wake up, Dan! Hot Rod has one more lap and then it’s your turn.” As that sentence sank in, I jumped up and tried to stretch my aching muscles. Have you ever had one of those moments where you wished you could go back in time and change what you had done?

I was on a team of ten Marines running a 24-hour relay to help raise funds for Morale Welfare and Recreation which would be used to help Marines and their families in need. The 24-hour relay went like this: one marine or sailor would run a mile, then hand off the baton to the next runner. In order for the team to register one mile, ten people had to complete one mile each. So, it was pretty important for every team member to make it all 24 hours or as long as they possibly could. If someone dropped out of the relay, the other men on their team would have to run that person’s mile in addition to their own.

We raised donations for our team for every mile the team ran. Remember, it took 10 individual miles to equal one team mile. Our team also received individual donations based on the average speed per mile over the 24 hours, the top three runners on our team, and the total distance each member ran. Most of the Marines on my team were very competitive, but we did lose a couple of guys before the race was over. Our team shrank from 10 to 6 men sometime during the night, which meant those of us remaining had to run even faster and twice as much, about one mile every 30 minutes. All night long.

Hot Rod and Nunzi were the two fastest members of our team that night, holding steady in the first and second positions. I was averaging just a little slower than those guys at around a 5-minute-mile pace. If I wanted any chance to catch them and stay ahead of Rummey, who was competing with me for the Number Three position, I had to keep my time below 5 minutes. So when my teammate woke me up to take my turn around the track, I realized that little cat nap had hurt me far more than it had helped. I was not ready to run at that moment, and I only had about a minute to make myself ready. I knew I had made a big mistake by getting rest instead of getting ready.

Evaluating our progress is good and wise. Evaluation helps us stay on track or make course correction so we can achieve our goal. Evaluation will sometimes help us to realize our goals are unreasonable and need to be tweaked to keep them reasonable. During the long night of our MWR relay, it became apparent that maintaining a 5-minute mile pace was going to be unreachable over the course of the race. I had to adjust my goal to allow for my teammates who dropped out and increased demands on me and the other guys still in the competition. Sometimes evaluation will cause us to completely change our goal.

As 2019 comes to an end, most of will be looking back over the past year and evaluating how things went. We might be asking ourselves, “Did I achieve my goals?” Or, “Did I miss the mark?” If we missed the mark, we might evaluate whether that was due to circumstances within our control or out of our control. If we could have done things differently and caused a more favorable outcome, then maybe we will decide to alter our course for the coming year. We may stop to think about new goals we should set for our ourselves in our jobs or in our personal lives.

The end of the year is a good time to ask, “Where am I spiritually?” “Am I being chained down by the past?” “Are my dreams of the future based on my desires, or God’s Word?”

With the time we have left in 2019, I want us to take a look at God’s Word – to dig down deep – so we can set some goals for 2020 that will make a difference, goals that will help us grow as individuals and also impact our community. We will be looking at Philippians 3, so we can ***Love and Live for the Word in 2020***. In Philippians 3 we will see Paul’s goal, to Live for the Word, explained in verses 13 and 14. And if we are to truly grasp Paul’s goal of living for the Word, we will also need to understand his motivation, to Love the Word, from verse 8-10.

Please turn in your bibles to Philippians 3, we will read verses 8-14. You can find our verses on page ____ in the Bible that is inside the seatback rack in front of you. If you do not have a Bible, feel free to take this Bible home with you as a gift from Edgewood. _____ who serves at _____ will read our verses for us. You can follow along in your Bible or read along on the screen. Philippians 3:8-14. “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Pray-

Love the Word- When it comes to his goal, Paul is laser-focused. He doesn’t mess around. He zeroes in quickly on the motivation for his goal, his love for Jesus. Paul is very precise and intentional with the words he chooses, Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. The word we translate as “count” is in the perfect tense and represents a continual action of considering, counting or deeming. The word loss could be translated damaged or of lesser value.

Prior to being saved, Paul had many things he considered valuable. Paul valued his race, his lineage, and his religion. He was a Jew. He was of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a religious leader, a Pharisee. In Acts 22:3 Paul says he was a student under Gamaliel a famous teacher, who agreed to teach and disciple Paul.

What is it that you value? Your job? House? Status? Education? Heritage? Sometimes we wonder what we really value. Knowing people? Accomplishing tasks? Our hobbies? Living out our dreams through someone else – perhaps a child, nephew, niece, or a professional athlete? What do I value? What do you value?

The phrase “surpassing worth” comes from a compound Greek word *huperechon*- *Huper* above and *echon* to hold. Building off his use of the accounting term *loss*, Paul is saying he considers knowing Christ as superior in value to all other endeavors in life.

If I were to put this passage in my own words, I would say, “Every minute of every day I consider everything I once valued as less valuable than knowing Christ. Knowing Christ is the supreme goal of my life, more valuable than any other accomplishment or status I could have in this life.”

The things I value, I love. I really do. The things I love, I talk about. The things I talk about, I do (or I want to do them). The things I do are the things I spend money on. When I love something, I study it. I try to be an expert at it. I spend time on it. I know it. Are you tracking with me? Then let's decide to *Love and Live for the Word in 2020*.

It would be wise for us to consider some things we may be chasing after, or the things our culture encourages us chase after. Many people throw themselves into their jobs. They work like crazy, give it their all, and climb the corporate ladder. They may work long hours or spend their spare time at home working or thinking about their jobs. They may be there physically but not emotionally. Others may value possessions and want the latest and greatest toys, cars, motorcycles, or houses. Some of us set goals to be in the best shape possible. We train, cross fit, work out, run, or lift that piece of bacon up multiple times to our mouths. Maybe that's just my work out plan. But seriously, we can be so focused on exercising that nothing can ever interrupt our schedule or plan. For some of it may be pleasure. We seek to do whatever pleases us, from hobbies to eating, shopping, napping, or relationships. Some of us are looking to run away from trouble. We drown our sorrows in alcohol, chemicals, anger, eating, fighting, or fixing people. Not all of these things are bad, in fact, some of them are good for us. Doing well at our jobs, staying fit and healthy, these things are good. However, making anything except following Christ our most sought-after goal in life will lead to feelings of emptiness, disappointment, and sadness. Solomon confirmed this when he wrote that finding purpose in anything other than God is vanity. (ask Beth)

Looking back at our text, Paul says the thing of ultimate value in his life is “knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” This is crucial, please don't miss it. Paul doesn't want to know Christ for

what he can gain from Christ, although we do get tremendous blessing from knowing Christ and accepting his free gift of salvation. Paul doesn't want to just know Jesus on that surface level. He wants to know the real Jesus, Jesus Christ Lord!

In the original language it is *kyrios*. The ESV says "Lord." We could say "master," or "owner." But sometimes "lord" seems safer to me because when I think of this word, it doesn't carry the same weight of "master" or "owner." The term "lord" conveys the idea of a liege, like a medieval landowner. This conveys a give-and-take relationship. I give my allegiance, and the Lord gives me protection through his name, rank, and armies. I have a say in this relationship. I can give my allegiance to whomever I want. I can leave and find a new lord if he isn't giving me the things I want.

But master or owner? Those words do not leave any room for doubt about their meaning. They eliminate the idea of pledging allegiance in exchange for protection. Those words eliminate the give-and-take. All that is left is obedience. When I have a master, my value is determined by that master. He does what He wants when He wants, and I have no say in it. It's not a give-and-take relationship.

Do I want to know Christ solely to avoid punishment? Do I want to know Christ just so I can spend eternity in heaven with my loved ones? Do I want to know Christ for the blessings He is able to provide me? Or do I want to know Him and Him alone, just for the sake of knowing him more?

Paul clarifies this too. He says in verse 9, "in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith." Paul wants Christ and Christ alone. Paul doesn't want Christ as fire insurance, or Christ as the blessing vendor. He doesn't want Christ as a liege, where he works really hard to be more obedient than disobedient, or more good than bad, so that Christ will owe him salvation in return. Paul wants Christ and Christ alone so he can have a faith-based righteousness.

Please hear me, Church. If you are trusting in your good works to get you into heaven, you have an improper understanding of salvation. The righteousness Paul wants comes through faith alone in Christ. The righteousness that comes from God is by faith alone. Being saved from the penalty of your sin, living from eternity separated from God, by being good. It doesn't come from Christ plus something. It's not Christ plus serving that gets you into heaven. Nor is it Christ plus tithing, or Christ plus reading your Bible, or Christ plus attending church, or Christ plus baptism, or Christ plus anything else. Our salvation, living for eternity in God's presence, is had by faith in Jesus Christ's death on the cross for our sins. His resurrection and ascension into heaven proves He is God's acceptable sacrifice.

Paul reiterates this in other books too. Galatians 2:21 reads, “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness^{s^a} were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.” Romans 4:4-5 “Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in^{n^a} him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,” Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Do you want Christ and the salvation offered by His shed blood on the cross as your sin substitute?

That’s why Paul *loves* Christ and that’s why he wants to know Jesus more than anything. Paul repeats this desire to know Christ in verse 10. Verse 10 reads, “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,” Church, we can ***Love and Live for the Word in 2020***.

When you love someone, you want to get to know them. In John 1 we read that Jesus is the Word. The Word is a person, Jesus Christ. Love the Word church. Love the Word for who He is.

I want to share with you some of the reasons I love the Living Word, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Holy Spirit and God are one. They have both always existed. Let that sink in for a moment. In eternity past they existed, for a long, long time. Then they created everything. They made everything, all the beautiful flowers, from orchids, to roses, to tulips, to dandelions and edelweiss. Okay, be honest were you thinking, “Edelweiss, edelweiss every morning you greet me, small and white, clean and bright...” Sorry I digressed. But think about it, all the beautiful flowers for us to enjoy and pick which one we like best or even rub on our noses to see if it turns yellow. (And we all know that if our nose does turn yellow after rubbing a dandelion on it, it means we love butter.) God didn’t need flowers, he made them for us to enjoy. Then he created every living thing. Raise your hand if you’re a dog lover. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit made dogs, and cats, and hamsters, and lizards and cardinals and eagles, and walleye, and striped bass, and the list goes on and on. They didn’t need any of them either. They made them for us, man and woman, the pinnacle of their creation, who are made in their image. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, they love us, plain and simple. Church, ***Love and Live for the Word in 2020***

Jesus, the Living Word, left heaven. Try to wrap your mind around that. Jesus left heaven, the perfect place with the perfect relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, to be born here, on earth. He willingly entered the muck and grime and sin of this world. He became the God-man, 100% God and 100% man, for all of mankind. Becoming the God-man meant He voluntarily gave up some of His rights as God when He was born. He set aside some of His rights as the second person of the Trinity, to be born a little baby boy in a

feeding trough, hungry, weak, and needing to be taken care of. In His weakness, he fled to Egypt to avoid Herod's wrath. The all-powerful, all knowing, eternal, God the Son, creator of everything we see and enjoy, did this willingly for me and you. He modeled a life of obedience, even when He didn't want to. The Word loved, taught and disciplined real people with real problems. He ate with people the religious elite despised and taught the uneducated blue-collar people. He healed and performed other miracles in the presence of those who disliked him and even wanted him dead. He lovingly disciplined, encouraged, and occasionally scolded, the disciples when they pridefully fought to be in a position of higher status. ***Love and Live for the Word in 2020.***

How can we not love Him? Seriously. Do you know, He loved us first and that's why we love Him? I can't speak for anyone on this but myself. Unfortunately, it's easier than I want to admit. I can take Jesus for granted. I can forget why I fell in love with Him in the first place. I can forget to spend time with Him. I can forget to talk to Him. In fact, this can happen in any relationship, with our spouses, children, siblings, parents, of our forever family. I can get upset that things aren't going the way I want.

I know I can't be the only one. When we take a relationship for granted, forget why we care for that person, stop talking to them, stop spending time with them, or make it all about us, that relationship suffers.

If your relationship with the living Word is suffering, dig into the written Word. Love the Written Word. Start with the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament. Here you will learn about Jesus, see how He lived, see what He cared, see who He spent time with, and learn how He interacted with others. Matthew 1:1 says, The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Mark 1:1, reads, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Hear portions Luke wrote in 1:1-4, "many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us... it seemed good to me also...to write an orderly account...that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." Listen the opening verses of John 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. ⁴In him was life,^(a) and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

The writer of Hebrews reminds us, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Hebrews 1:1-2). Here are few facets to Jesus' life, found in John 10, that are good for us to know and be reminded of, So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep... I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out

and find pasture” (John 10: 7&9). “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.” (John 10:29-30)

Jesus reminds us He reveals Himself to those of simple faith, He reveals the Father to us, and His way is not burdensome, but easy. Matthew 11:25-30 reads, “At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Here’s one of my favorites. It’s one of my favorites because it is such a good reminder that we need to stay connected to God. Luke 6:12 reads, “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.” Jesus the God-man needed to get away from the business of life and people to be alone with God. If Jesus needed this, how much more do we need to do it? There are many verses that talk about Jesus getting alone and spending time with God. We learn about this habit of Jesus by reading the Written Word. *Love and Live for the Word in 2020.*

Moving from his motivation, Loving the Word, we see Paul’s goal, to Live for the Word. Paul shows us that Living for the Word involves two aspects. The first aspect is to forget that which is past. Forgetting has two shades of meaning. When I think of forgetting, the first meaning that pops in my head is to not recall. The second meaning is to give little attention to it or neglect it. The past should not have a hold on us if we are to Live for the Word. Have you ever noticed how the past can affect you? I have. Sometimes I can live in the past, focusing on my successes. This doesn’t necessarily have to be a bad thing, but it can. We can often think, remember when...I was really close to God and serving Christ... ah those were the good days. We can think that way while today we may have drifted away from God and are not currently serving him.

Maybe you have had the privilege of watching the movie Napoleon Dynamite. It may be taking it a little far to say that watching that movie is a privilege, but if you have seen it, you may remember Napoleon’s uncle Rico. He was stuck in the glory days of his high school football days. It is a very funny part of the movie, but it actually rings true for many people. There have even been songs written about the “glory days”. If you have let your relationship with Christ slide to the back burner, go ahead and remember the times in the past you have

been close to God and served Christ wholeheartedly. But don't stay stuck in your memories of the past; let those earlier days motivate you and drive you to serve even harder today!

Not only can we get hung up in our glory days of the past, our mistakes from the past can weigh us down and keep us in heavy chains. This is the main enemy to living for Christ. Our past mistakes and regrets can have long tentacles like arms, similar to vines like in Jumanji, that can grab hold of you and slowly break even the strongest defenses. Shame, embarrassment, and guilt can have devastating effects. They can be emotional and spiritual shackles that keep us captive. Often, we feel forgiveness and progress are impossible. When we feel we cannot be forgiven, it is good to remember those feelings are not based on the truth. Feelings are most definitely real, and they do affect us. But sometimes our feelings are not based on the truth. We are never beyond the reach of God's forgiveness.

Paul, a man who was feared and despised for his zealous persecution of the early church tells us, "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind..." One of the things Paul is forgetting is the death of Stephen. Paul was there when Stephen was stoned and although he didn't stone Peter, he was there watching it happen and looking after clothing of those who stoned Stephen. Paul confirms this in verse 3, "as to zeal, a persecutor of the church" But in Romans 10:13 Paul says, For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." John writes in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

If you need some help finding freedom from a "hurt, habit, or hang-up," there are many ways to find help. Some of our struggles are deep, painful, and raw. We may need to find professional help to work through those types of struggles. There are Christian counselors who can help. Celebrate Recovery can also help. Celebrate Recovery is a 12-step faith-based recovery program that can help with any of life's hurts, habits, or hang-ups. Here at Edgewood we also have Divorce Care starting soon, and Grief Care starting in early 2020. There will be a post-abortion care class at Pregnancy Resources starting up in January called "Forgiven and Set Free". Statistics tell us that 1 in 4 women have had an abortion. Edgewood, I know some of us are struggling with this. Kathy Nagle, who read our scripture passage today, will lead this class. She understands the feeling of guilt and shame that you may be struggling. She has found healing, forgiveness and grace, and so can you. *Love and Live for the Word in 2020*

To live for the Word, we need to forget the past and *strain* for God's goal. Paul says, straining forward to what lies ahead. Straining conveys the idea of stretching as far forward as you can, overextending. It is a picture of tremendous, focused effort, much like my MWR relay that long night spent competing for and against my fellow Marines for a worthy cause.

Paul isn't telling us to sit around and think about a goal, or even to try really hard to reach a goal. Paul is telling us to set our goal and then do everything in our power to make it happen. When you hear the word "strain," think of the sprinter extending his head as far forward as possible to cross the finish line with everything he has, so that when he crosses the finish line, he falls over face first on the track because he has absolutely nothing left. That's the image Paul wants us to have. Someone who is laser-focused, giving everything, they've got, and launching themselves across the finish line with every last ounce of strength they possess.

Let's talk about that, falling across the finish line. Have you ever tried so hard that you fell across the finish line? That's some serious focus and effort. I have not strained to the point of falling, but once I pushed myself so hard, I thought I pulled a muscle and almost went down. In that brief moment, I remember thinking, "Man, this is going to hurt." Giving it everything you have means the goal is so important to you, you do not care what the cost is going to be. There is a cost to being that focused. Your goal takes priority. You willingly say no to anything that stands in the way of accomplishing your goal. You train, you diet, you go to bed early. You read up on different techniques so you can improve your skills. As you get better and more focused, the little things become vitally important. The little things add up to big things, and those big things make a huge difference in achieving your goal.

Paul tells us what our goal should be when he says, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." The goal isn't what I want it to be. The goal isn't about what I want it to be or what I think is important, the goal is God's goal. It's what He thinks is important. This will entail using the gifts he has given you, but it's not always what you want when you want it. I'm pretty sure Jeremiah didn't want to be the weeping prophet. Hosea would not have chosen to marry the prostitute Gomer. Stephen would not have chosen to be stoned. Paul wasn't begging to be whipped, stoned, shipwrecked, or imprisoned or killed. But they all knew what was important. They all understood that straining towards God's calling comes with a price, and they still pressed forward to embrace God's goal. ***Love and Live for the Word in 2020***

For some of us, that's a new thought. We may have never even considered what goals God would have for us. I remember a time when I was studying to be a paramedic so I could become a firefighter. I had never honestly considered what God wanted for my life. I remember studying God's Word and realizing He had a plan for my life that I could embrace. I wasn't sure what that plan was, but God impressed upon me the need to be His witness. As I embraced this goal at the paint factory where I was working while going to school, God impressed upon me the desire to change directions and pursue missions. As I embraced this new goal, it meant quitting my job, selling my house, and moving my family out of state. It meant driving a school bus part-time to pay the bills during Bible school. It meant late nights and busy weekends studying because I was not a stellar student. I was 30 years old, and my memory was not what it used to be. We drove old vehicles and wore used clothing and ate expired food donated to the college's food pantry.

This was a very difficult lesson for me, but one I needed to learn. My family saw God lead us and provide for us in amazing ways during our time at New Tribes Bible Institute. We ended up serving in Thailand for 3 ½ years. We learned to read and write Central Thai, a very difficult tonal language, and how to act within their culture. We moved to a very small Phu Thai village, where I developed health issues that eventually sent us back to America. I had to quit being a missionary and was given the opportunity to serve full-time here at my home church, Edgewood. That's how God works. He takes broken people and changes, empowers, and uses them to glorify him in ways he knows are best. I always thought God was going to use me as a laser focused firefighter to serve Him in the QC, but He had other plans. Could He have used me as sold-out firefighter? You bet! Or a sold-out paint technician, or a sold-out whatever. He could have used me anywhere, but he is using me here. If achieving God's goal for your life is your number one priority, he will show you ways you can serve him right where you are. *Love and Live for the Word in 2020*

What's next? This is a very important question for all of us to ask. What do we do with this?

1. Love the Word in 2020.

a. If you are here and you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your sin substitute, today is the day of your salvation. Admit you've broken God's commands, we all have. Turn away from trying to earn your salvation by believing Jesus died on the cross as your sin substitute and cry out to God to save you. Remember, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

b. Love the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ. Talk to Him, get to know Him, and think about Him. Remember what He's done, how He's sacrificed, how He obediently followed God's will to the point of death, and how He loves you and pursues you for His own. He loved you before you loved Him, and He loves you too much to let you stay where you are. Right after I graduated bootcamp and returned home, my car died. But I didn't let that stop me from seeing my girlfriend. I ran six miles to be with her and talk to her. I need to love the Living Word like that, and so do you.

c. Love the written Word God. Dig into it, soak it up, live in it. If you want to love the Living Word of God, you will need to love the written Word of God. It's in those pages you learn about Jesus. It's there you'll learn to trust Him and serve no matter what the cost. Hebrews 4:12 reads, For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The written Word of God is no ordinary book. It is supernatural and alive. Commit today to reading it on a daily basis. Grab a reading plan for January at the resource kiosk and read along with many of your Edgewood family. Or read through the Bible in a year. Whatever plan you choose, just read the Word of God every day. When you miss, pick up reading right where you were. Don't fall behind and try to make it up and get overwhelmed. Just keep reading.

2. Live for the Word in 2020.

a. Forget your past. Don't stay stuck celebrating your old successes and don't get chained up in your old failures by living with regret and shame. If you have unconfessed sin in your life, confess it now. If you've confessed your sin, find some help to overcome your temptations. The struggle with sin is real. There will be days when you do what you don't want to do and when you do not do what you want to do. Decide today to join a group where you can find community and healing. Join CR, Divorce Care, or Grief Care. Find a Christian counselor to talk with. If you have an abortion in past, trust God and join Forgiven and set Free. It will be held at Pregnancy Resources in Moline on Tuesdays starting January 7. Call (309)797-3636 for more information. There are flyers in the women's restrooms also.

b. Strain for God's goal for life. Aim to fall across His finish line because you've given it everything you have, down to the last drop. I will be leading an elective class on How to Share Your Faith with Confidence, where you can become more confident in sharing the gospel with your loved ones. Serve with one of our local Go Team partners, Christian Care, Pregnancy Resources, Safe Families, Youth Hope or World Relief. You can serve in nursery, Edgekids, Awana, the Tech Team, or Worship Team, or at Celebrate Recovery. Join a Growth Group, either a Sunday Growth group or a weekday Growth Group where you serve your Edgewood family and grow spiritually. Many people wonder where they can serve. My advice to them is to just start serving. Get in there, roll up your sleeves, and trust Christ. If later you discover that's not the place for you, then you can always start serving at a new place. Say yes to God's goal for your life and let Him put you where you need to be so you can serve how He wants you to serve.

I am not sure what God's specific plans are for your life. But God's plans always include sharing the gospel and serving. If you are not already serving or sharing your faith, you can start in 2020. Edgewood let's commit to strain for the highest goal together. Let's *Love and Live for the Word in 2020*.

PRAY-

