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Background Paper
For
St. Timothy's
21 Days of Renewal
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According to Acts 3, Peter addressed his friends in Jerusalem and called upon them to **“repent...and turn to God** so that their sins may be forgiven, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and so that He may send the Messiah to return for the universal restoration.

Please hear **“so times of refreshing may come.”** Peter might have said **“so times of renewal may come.”** In a similar fashion, the Apostle Paul would call for a “daily dying and rising”...dying to the old self which sins and being raised up to a new self through the power of the resurrection. To be refreshed...to be renewed...is an essential for life.

Times of renewal come when we **“repent”** and **“turn.”** Both words imply a **“turning.”** The former implies **a turning away** from a wrong direction and the latter refers to **a turning toward** a positive direction.

For us, the turning away is a turning away from ways that result in death. The turning toward is to a person and a way which brings life...life to me the individual and life to the world that God places me in.

Furthermore, what is true for individuals is true for faith communities. Faith communities are made up of individuals. But they are more than a collection of individuals. They are a “being” and have a life of their own. That is why faith communities also need to “repent and turn” so that they might be refreshed.

There are **four “turnings”** that need to occur.

- 1) There needs to be **a turning to Christ.** To turn to Christ is to believe in him, to trust him to be the Son of God, to be united with him. It is to be forgiven and redeemed for a life with him.
- 2) There needs to be **a turning to Christ's ethic.** The behavioral example Jesus set for us calls us into Christ-like decision making and behavior. To turn to Christ's ethic is to turn to a way of doing that mimics Christ.
- 3) There needs to be **a turning to the Christian congregation.** Made up of the redeemed in Christ, the Christian congregation is the gathering where the Word of God is spoken and received, where individuals are nurtured and sent out, where the collective becomes a safe house in the midst of a turbulent world. Disciples of Christ turn to the congregation as an essential part of their life.
- 4) There needs to be **a turning to the world in Christian love and mission.** God's work of ministering to a broken world, of reconciling all things unto himself, of stewarding all of his creation...our lives in Christ are to take that direction. We turn to be His instruments, the tools by which God accomplishes His purposes.

There are **six “disciplines”** (or practices) of the Christian life that are most likely to produce the realization of the **four turnings**.

They are:

- 1) **Worship.** Facing God-ward is the beginning of life with Him. Worship of Him realizes the need to make Him God ... and no other. Corporate worship on a regular basis affords the habit of a God-ward orientation and the structure within which the Christian life is nurtured and practiced.
- 2) **Prayer.** Basking in the presence of God is the ultimate in personal relationship with Him. Listening for God postures as for heeding Him rather than ourselves, for taking guidance from Him rather than others, for placing in His hands all that comes our way. Praying in His will... praying for His will... praying without ceasing ... is the goal.
- 3) **Scripture.** The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the “cradle” of Christ. There we hear the mighty acts of God to deliver and through these stories a word from the Lord leaps out at us. On a regular basis we need to both study the scriptures and mediate upon them. From them we “hear” a Word of the Lord.
- 4) **Giving.** God makes it possible to give...whether it is giving of possessions or of time and talents. Giving demonstrates our faith in God’s provision as we give some of it away, knowing that He replenishes and always supplies “enough.” Knowing this frees us to be generous. Our giving is understood from the perspective of being a steward of that which belongs to another; namely, God himself.
- 5) **Serving.** It is in mercy that we reach out to the person in need. In profound acts of mercy we come closest to mimicking the mercy of Christ. Taking the role of the servant affords a practical method of “putting on Christ” and demonstrating His presence.
- 6) **Witnessing.** Putting words to one’s thoughts and experiences of Christ afford the opportunity for others to come to know Him and to follow Him. Saying out loud what is deep within also gives us a way of “second hearing.” From that “second hearing” our faith and belief grows and we become more adept at witnessing to the Christ we have come to know.

The “**21 Days of Renewal**” will aim to trigger the Four Turnings through introduction and practice of the Six Disciplines. Following the model of the Acts 2 church which “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers,” St. Timothy’s will gather three evenings a month, over a period of seven months between September and April. The format will include food and fellowship, singing and worship, teaching and sharing.

Invited are all adults and friends of St. Timothy and the youth from grade seven and up.

From “repenting and turning to the Lord” will arise times of refreshing...times that will renew the individual as well as renew God’s community called St. Timothy.