**All Church Worship Brainstorming Summary**

**No Fear November**

Monday, October 9, 2023 in the LHUMC Lounge

12:00 p.m. Potluck

12:45-3:00 p.m. Brainstorming for Worship

November 5-19, 2023 (3 weeks)

**Members present:** Carole Koch, Rose Emmons, Dave Booth, Jean Kelly, Sue Baranowski, Ed Baranowski, Diane Thompson, Pastor Mary, Karen Booth

*“The worship we hope to develop will be rooted in Scripture, centered on Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It will be relevant to local and emerging culture, while addressing the needs of believers and unbelievers alike. Above all, it will intentionally engage people physically, emotionally, intellectually, and soulfully.”*

Felt needs: What physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual need are we addressing in this service so that worship is engaging and a means of making disciples? What question needs to be posed/answered so that we are making disciples?

**2023 Theme:**  Jesus is Our Past, Present, and Future Hope

**Key verse:** 38For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,

neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39neither height nor depth, nor

anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in

Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8: 38-39 (NIV)*

**Major spoken/unspoken needs:**

* It is so easy to not attend church when I can watch it online. Worship is for God, not us. Convenience vs. sacrifice. Logistics vs. routine.
* Pastoral care, especially around losses: Grief. Family. Division. Addiction. Unrealized dreams. Financial woes. Abortion. Open marriages.
* Relationships. Reconciliation.
* Fear and regret

**Social justice issue for November 2023:** Hunger & Food Insecurity

**2023 theme connection:** We have fears – it’s part of being human. In this series, we’ll shine a light on some of our greatest fears and see how our faith in Jesus can help us let go of the past, live in the present, and have hope for the future.

**Series synopsis:** Fear saturates our society. Everywhere we turn we’re faced with a new security threat, informed about a new health risk, or warned about some kind of impending doom. But does this overwhelming presence of fear help us pursue the right path in life? Or does it pull us away from God’s purpose for us?

**Notes:**In June 2020, we used Adam Hamilton’s Unafraid as a resource and focused on fear of the other, fear of failure, fear of loneliness, and fear of death. For this series, we’ll focus on other specific fears.

**Resources:**

* “[No Fear November](https://creativepastors.com/product/no-fear-november/): Overcoming Phobias that Keep Us Paralyzed” by Ed Young
* “[~~No Fear November~~](http://www.fellowship301media.com/sermons/series/no-fear-november/)~~” by Mike Grover~~. *Note:* This link is no longer active, but is probably from [Fellowship Baptist Church](https://fellowship301.org/our-leaders) in Florida.
* Sermon series resources from Greater New Jersey Conference UMC <https://www.gnjumc.org/tossingandturning/>
* Articles from Ministry Matters on various topics related to fear
	+ <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/9361/moving-beyond-fear>
	+ <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/7824/7-fears-of-highly-effective-leaders>
	+ <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/10197/why-choose-generosity-in-times-of-uncertainty-and-fear>
	+ <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/10115/how-to-overcome-fear>
	+ <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/5433/5-real-fears-of-growing-older>
	+ <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2254/fears-of-aging>



**Anchor image/Visuals:**

* Pillow – what keeps us up at night – tossing and turning?
* Things that offer comfort: Rocking chair, stuffed animal (Jean’s big dog), blanket/quilt/comforter, cup of tea, crafts (knitting needles/yarn), nature (big picture window?), music, scented candle, other things from the image, right.
* Is there a way to highlight the series title?
* The logo on page 1 is kind of scary. We’ll look for images that provide comfort.

**Hands-on item:**

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**Useful stuff:** Go to our [website](https://lakeharborumc.org/2023/10/october-9-2023-worship-brainstorming-for-no-fear-november/) for more details

* Pepper & Salt comics (9-23-23, 10-1-23)
* Family Circus and Baldo comics (10-8-23)

**Music ideas:** Use In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful (FWS 2195) each week.

* First Song of Isaiah (FWS 2030)
* Be Thou My Vision (UMH 451)
* Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus (UMH 349)
* God of Grace and God of Glory (UMH 577) – *Grant us wisdom, grant us courage…*
* God of Love and God of Power (UMH 578) – *We are not the first to be banished by our fears from thee; give us courage…*
* How Firm a Foundation (UMH 529) – *Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed…*
* Standing on the Promises (UMH 374)
* “Whom Shall I Fear?” by Chris Tomlin
* “Trust in You” by Lauren Daigle
* “No Longer Slaves” by Bethel Music

**Children’s Time:** Use items that give us comfort – blanket, stuffed animal, etc. *On a related note:* [30 Things that make us feel comforted in 30 minutes or less](https://cupcakesandcashmere.com/lifestyle/things-that-make-us-feel-comforted-in-30-minutes-or-less)

**Media:** Both are good. We can’t livestream the second one.

* [“Do Not Fear for I Am With You.”](https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/130775/do-not-fear-for-i-am-with-you-minimovie) Length: 1:18. Cost: $15.00. Web license: Yes. This highlights the Bible’s repeated admonition to not fear, emphasizing that despite the power of fear to limit us, God’s presence with us is the reason we need not be afraid. **Comments:** There are some healthy fears that keep us safe. We shouldn’t fear things that hold us back from setting goals and achieving aspirations.
* “[Do Not Fear.”](https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/116287/do-not-fear) Length: 2:04. Cost: $20.00. Web license: Probably not. We live in a world full of worry, fear, and chaos. We’re often blinded by the noise of the world, but when we take the time to look up, we’re reminded of who our God is and all that he has done. **Comments:** This helps us think about our fears and worries. Very relatable.

**General discussion points:**

* Life stages: We have different fears at different points in our lives. How can we highlight those differences so that we understand each other’s fears better? What can we do to address them? Note: Many of these fears may start in a particular decade of life, but can continue for years.
	+ *Young kids:* Fear of the dark. Monsters under the bed. Making friends (lifelong).
	+ *Teens:* Making friends, the team, etc. Passing tests. Getting into college. Violence (active shooter drills).
	+ *Twenties:* Getting a job. Violence (especially gun violence).
	+ *Thirties:* Providing for spouse and family (ongoing).
	+ *Forties:* Worrying about our kids and parents. Our own health/aging (stepping on the scale).
	+ *Fifties:* Kids. Grandkids. Parents. Own health. Prepping for retirement.
	+ *Sixties:* Health. Changes that come with retirement. Finances.
	+ *Seventies and beyond:* Health (physical, mental – dementia, Alzheimer’s). Falling (literally). Finances (outliving resources). Falling for scams. Loss of independence. Isolation.
* What keeps us up at night? In addition to everything listed above:
	+ The pace of change.
	+ The immediacy of hearing about bad stuff.
	+ Fearful dreams: What do they mean? Are we trying to work out our problems? Is God speaking to us? Are our brains full?
	+ Horror movies.
* What gives us comfort?
	+ Companions
	+ Our own home/house
	+ Financial security

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**November 5, 2023:** **“Destination Unknown, But God Is There”**

(Fear of the Future) -Pentecost 23

**Scripture:** Psalm 46 (NLT)

#### *For the choir director: A song of the descendants of Korah, to be sung by soprano voices.*

**1**God is our refuge and strength,
    always ready to help in times of trouble.
**2**So we will not fear when earthquakes come
    and the mountains crumble into the sea.
**3**Let the oceans roar and foam.
    Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! *Interlude*

**4**A river brings joy to the city of our God,
    the sacred home of the Most High.
**5**God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed.
    From the very break of day, God will protect it.
**6**The nations are in chaos,
    and their kingdoms crumble!
God’s voice thunders,
    and the earth melts!
**7**The Lord of Heaven’s Armies is here among us;
    the God of Israel[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm+46&version=NLT#fen-NLT-14598b)] is our fortress. *Interlude*

**8**Come, see the glorious works of the Lord:
    See how he brings destruction upon the world.
**9**He causes wars to end throughout the earth.
    He breaks the bow and snaps the spear;
    he burns the shields with fire.

**10**“Be still, and know that I am God!
    I will be honored by every nation.
    I will be honored throughout the world.”

**11**The Lord of Heaven’s Armies is here among us;
    the God of Israel is our fortress. *Interlude*

**Scripture:** Proverbs (NKJV)

Common English Bible: Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord,
    but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

1: 7 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
    but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

3: 5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:25-34 (NIV) *Do Not Worry*

**25**“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? **26**Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? **27**Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

**28**“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. **29**Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. **30**If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? **31**So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32**For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **34**Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

**Synopsis:** We often like to control the future of our lives, so much so that we toss and turn at night. We stress out and worry about things that we can’t control. You may hear and even say, “God is in control,” but what does that mean as we live today and look at tomorrow?

**Felt need:** To let our faith in God (and fear/awe of God) be bigger than our fear of the future unknown. **Comments:** This can sound flippant. It does seem oversimplified to many of us, but some people take great comfort in saying this. Carole suggested phrasing it as, "In your fear, don’t forget your faith.” On a related note: Jean prays, “Please guide and direct me.” **Comments:** Mixed reviews. Seeing the images in the video has a “yuck” factor. Saying, “Jesus has overcome it,” is the basis of our faith. God doesn’t will the crap/bad stuff. What do we allow or not allow to happen matters. There is comfort in knowing the even death cannot pull us away from God.

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** Holy Communion

**Media possibilities:**

* [“Worst Case Scenario.”](https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/55173/worstcase-scenario) Length: 2:27. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. Controlled by fear and worry, our minds often race to the worst-case scenario in any circumstance. However, God wants us to trust Him with our tomorrows, and realize that He is faithful to walk with us through whatever may come. **Comments:** Funny and true.
* [“Fear Not.”](https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/93172/fear-not) Length: 1:19. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. A reminder that we have always had trouble in this world, but Jesus has overcome it. The news that He lives is still the greatest news of all.

**Music:**

**Children’s time:**

**Social media:**

**Resources:**

**Discussion points:**

* Are worry and fear the same thing?
	+ Rose sees worry being born out of fear.
	+ Pastor Mary, who is a life-long worrier, sees them being pretty equivalent.
* Proverbs: Fear of the Lord is awe and wonder, not the stuff that keeps us up nights.
* Wanting control and witness:
	+ We can only control the choices we make and the energy we spend on worry.
	+ Worry compromises our witness as Christians. How can we say that we trust that God is in control if we fret about every little thing?
	+ Seeing someone go through big trials and trusting God through the mess is a powerful witness.
* Pastor Mary has found it helpful to ask her kids, “What is the worst thing that can happen?” She wants them to name the issue or concern. The kids haven’t always appreciated her approach. ☺ She has used a similar approach in her role as a pastor.
* As a parent, Sue has seen God’s promises (and her prayers) fulfilled.

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**November 12, 2023:** **“You Are Accepted”** (Fear of Rejection)

Pentecost 24

**Scripture:** Psalm 27 (NIV) *Of David*

**1**The Lord is my light and my salvation—
    whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
    of whom shall I be afraid?

**2**When the wicked advance against me
    to devour[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm+27&version=NIV#fen-NIV-14288a)] me,
it is my enemies and my foes
    who will stumble and fall.
**3**Though an army besiege me,
    my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
    even then I will be confident.

**4**One thing I ask from the Lord,
    this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
    all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
    and to seek him in his temple.
**5**For in the day of trouble
    he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
    and set me high upon a rock.

**6**Then my head will be exalted
    above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
    I will sing and make music to the Lord.

**7**Hear my voice when I call, Lord;
    be merciful to me and answer me.
**8**My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”
    Your face, Lord, I will seek.
**9**Do not hide your face from me,
    do not turn your servant away in anger;
    you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
    God my Savior.
**10**Though my father and mother forsake me,
    the Lord will receive me.
**11**Teach me your way, Lord;
    lead me in a straight path
    because of my oppressors.
**12**Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
    for false witnesses rise up against me,
    spouting malicious accusations.

**13**I remain confident of this:
    I will see the goodness of the Lord
    in the land of the living.
**14**Wait for the Lord;
    be strong and take heart
    and wait for the Lord.

This can be interpreted as seeking other’s approval.

**Scripture:** Proverbs 29 – esp. v. 25 (NIV)

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.


### Scripture: I John 4: 7-21 (NIV) *God’s Love and Ours*

**7**Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. **8**Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9**This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. **10**This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **11**Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12**No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

**13**This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. **14**And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. **15**If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. **16**And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. **17**This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. **18**There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

**19**We love because he first loved us. **20**Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. **21**And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

**Synopsis:** It’s easy to feed our fear of rejection by paying more attention to what others think of us rather than remembering that we are loved and beloved by God. How do we stop doing the things that feed feelings of rejection and instead take on practices that help us overcome it?

**Felt need:** To let our recognition of God’s love and our desire for God’s wisdom, will, and way be bigger than our fear of rejection

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:** “Loved” sticker

**Activity:** Acknowledge Veterans Day

**Media possibilities:**

* ["But God Does Love You.”](https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/113705/but-god-does-love-you) Length: 1:20. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. “God loves you.” This mini-movie pushes past the cliches that simple phrase brings to mind for so many people and insists that God does love and that it matters. **Comments:** Use it. Key line: “But God does love you is not just a Band-Aid over a fatal wound.” Hearing that is hard to believe unless you can see someone reflects that love to you through action, not just speak it.
* [“Psalm 27.”](https://skitguys.com/videos/psalms-for-lent-iii-psalm-27) Length: 2:56. Cost: $18.00. Web license: Yes. Based on Psalm 27, this call to worship reflects on God as our shelter, reminding us that we don’t need to fear because we can be confident in His protection.
* [“Our Light (Psalm 27).”](https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/95923/our-light-psalm-27) Length: 1:25. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. You are our light. You are our salvation. Why should we fear? This energetic worship intro is based on Psalm 27.

**Music:**

**Children’s time:**

**Social media:**

**Resources:** Message illustration – October 8, 2023 Family Circus cartoon (hugs)

**Discussion points:**

* Knowing that we are “loved and beloved by God” doesn’t make human rejection any less painful.
* When Jean retired, she was filled with joy and some fear not knowing if she would find her place in this new phase of life. It helped her to look back and see how she made it through many different circumstances. She also actively made choices to engage in a new venture through getting to know her neighbors and volunteering.
* Why do we fear rejection?
	+ We don’t want to be the last one picked for a team.
	+ We fear conflict.
	+ There has been or is a breakdown in relationships, estrangement, etc.
	+ Social media is often harsh and judgmental.
* It is hard to get to the point of knowing that we are loved by God unless we have seen tangible signs from people who profess faith in him.
* We need community. Sometimes it isn’t clear if our God-given gifts will be valued by our community, especially if they are “quieter” gifts.
* Related activity: Write a note of appreciation to someone who isn’t expecting it and/or might not be recognized for their gifts.
* Isolation
* Not hearing, “I love you.” Saying, “They know I love them,” is not helpful. On a related note: Ed remembers taking two beers to a nursing home with a friend. The person they visited said they made his day.
* Important question: When did God’s love become real for me? Which season of life? When Pastor Mary asked one of the confirmands what faith meant, he said, “God is real.” Related movie: *Jesus Revolution* (now on Amazon Prime).
* What does the fear of rejection mean personally?
	+ Failure of self
	+ Questioning our own beliefs
	+ First impressions are harsh. Jean learned that 30% of people will instantly dislike you just based on outward appearances (this was at a work-related learning session).
	+ If we knew the “back-story” we might not have the same response. We don’t tend to talk about rejection and what is behind it.
* God loving us doesn’t mean things will always go our way, which is what the prosperity gospel preaches.
* Do we think about why we reject people/stuff/ideas?
* It is important to learn to deal with rejection. Parents need to let kids fail (to some extent) so they can learn and recover from failures.

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**November 19, 2023:** **“Are You ‘All In’?”** (Fear of Commitment)

Pentecost 25, Sunday before Thanksgiving

**NOTE:** ~~Pastor Mary will be on a trip to the Holy Land and will secure coverage. This service could be conducive to people sharing about how commitment has changed their lives.~~ It is likely that the trip will be cancelled due to war, but we will still entertain the idea of members offering their own personal testimony this week. Possible “volunteers”: Annette Erbes, Bob Kime

**Scripture:** Psalm 23 (NKJV)

*A Psalm of David.*

**23**The Lord *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.
**2**He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
**3**He restores my soul;
He leads me In the paths of righteousness
For His name’s sake.

**4**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You *are* with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

**5**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
**6**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord
Forever.

**Scripture:** Proverbs 16 – esp. v. 3

Commit to the Lord whatever you do,
    and he will establish your plans.

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 31: 7-8 (NIV)

**7**Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. **8**The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

**Scripture:** Philippians 4: 4-7 (NIV)

4Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

5Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**8**Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9**Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

**Synopsis:** Too often fear can keep us from experiencing the fullness of God’s blessings. We stand on the sidelines instead of making deeper commitments to use God’s gifts as a part of building God’s Kingdom. But our faith story is full of people who followed God faithfully and found great joy in loving and serving, and it can be our story too.

**Felt need:** To let our commitment to God be first in our lives so that other commitments fall into place

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:** We only watched the first video as a group.

* [“Psalm 23 – The Good Shepherd.”](https://skitguys.com/videos/psalm-23-the-good-shepherd) Length: 1:57. Cost: $18.98. Web license: Yes. We all need to be reminded that God is our protector, and that His goodness allows us to break free from our fears. No matter what happens to us, The Good Shepherd is always WITH us. **Comments:** We like it. Use it.
* [“Fear No Evil.”](https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/121069/fear-no-evil) Length: 2:33. Cost: $20.00. Web license: Yes. A mini movie themed from Psalm 23. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. I will no fear. But I am afraid. Yet somehow, in just releasing my worries to the ONE, there is a peace beyond all understanding that covers me. A relief. As if expressing my grief has allowed my cares to be cast upon the one who hold the world in his hands.
* [“In Uncertain Times.”](https://skitguys.com/videos/in-uncertain-times) Length: 1:35. Cost: $19.99. Web license: Yes. In uncertain times, it’s easy to be consumed by fear, anxiety, and hopelessness. But God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. As we walk this journey together, let us remember our God is not surprised by any of this. He is sovereign. He is in control. He is great, glorious, gracious, and good. May we, without hesitation, find strength and peace in that truth.

**Music:**

**Children’s time:**

**Social media:**

**Resources:**

**Discussion points:**

* People are encouraged by other people’s stories of faith and commitment. Ask at least a couple people to share how their lives have been transformed by committing them to God. Commit to God first and other things fall into place: relationships, ministry, vocation.
* Avoid comparing our gifts to someone else’s. One is not more important than another.
* Why are people afraid of committing?
	+ Fear of failure
	+ FOMO (fear of missing out – especially as it pertains to easier stuff or fun stuff)
	+ Selfishness
	+ Fear of being judged by other
	+ Fear of getting stuck in one role forever
* What are people willing to commit to now?
	+ Pleasure, toys
	+ Things that are easy
	+ Travel sports team
	+ Getting more money – which is not a reflection of being committed to a job
* On a professional note:
	+ There is less interest in being part of organized profession groups, even for the sake of knowing your colleagues better
	+ People expect to change jobs (or schools or sports teams)
	+ Jobs/professions take a back seat to other life priorities (family, sports, leisure, etc.) which in and of themselves are not bad things, but aren’t all important either
	+ The lack of commitment then means those left behind are more likely to burn out
* Faith is all about commitment all the time. Church is built on relationships.
* Barriers: These are different for each life stage
	+ Need for immediate gratification
	+ Lack of close relationships - family, neighbors, co-workers
	+ Not thinking ahead (planning for retirement)
* God is committed to us. Why can we commit to him?