

Good morning everyone, my name is Alicia Peterson and I am the lay leader for Anchor of Hope Recovery Ministry at the Faith Family Church here in Emerald. Anchor of Hope is dedicated to providing fellowship for individuals that are seeking Christ in their recovery. Reverend Bill Beaton and I have been providing this recovery service since the beginning of 2021 and have poured our hearts into this service. When we began the service, we were only offering the service on Zoom due to the pandemic. Around May of last year we began offering it in person as well as through Zoom. As of this past June, our services can now be viewed on Facebook where we are seeing quite a few people joining us this way. Throughout us providing this service, we've had a number of people come, share their story and participate in the service. We had an individual that took a very active role in the recovery service, attending every week for six months. Due to distance and building a relationship with his local church, we haven't seen him in a while, but we've maintained contact and he always sings praises for how Anchor of Hope helped him in his recovery.

As a ministry of this church, Anchor of Hope could use your help. Firstly, your prayers for our ministry, for Rev. Bill, and for myself are greatly coveted and appreciated. We fully believe that prayers are powerful and that God hears and answers our prayers. Secondly, we are asking you to consider becoming part of this ministry. Perhaps you or someone you know could benefit from this ministry. A referral to our website, Zoom link for our Monday services, or our Facebook page could go a long way toward someone attending and growing in their relationship with Christ. Feel free to attend our services on Monday nights at 7:00 p.m. at the church here in Emerald or online. We would love to serve you or someone you know as we all seek recovery from the hurts of this world.

When we began working on Anchor of Hope, we had a main focus of serving those with addictions to drugs and alcohol. We quickly learned that we needed to take it a step further and make it about true recovery. Reverend Bill and I have said probably hundreds of times since we started this recovery ministry, that as Christians we are all in recovery. We are all recovering from sin and hardship, we are all taking it one day at a time, trying to be disciples of Christ to further His kingdom. Because of sin, we live in a broken world, and we become more broken because we live in it. The world offers many substitutes for healing, joy, and peace. The world tells us that alcohol or other drugs can dull or make us forget the pain; that money and success can bring us joy; that a certain change can bring us peace. But that's not what the word of God

says. Jesus says “I am”. Jesus is our healing. Jesus is our joy. Jesus is our peace. Everything else is a cheap, temporary substitute.

In our recovery ministry we talk a lot about feelings of shame. The most wonderful thing about these feelings is that we are actually taking that first step of recovery by admitting that there is a problem. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. Not one person on this earth is without sin. We have all fallen short of what God intended for us. But the good news is that that is why Jesus came to earth. In Mark 2:17, Jesus said “Healthy people don’t need a doctor – sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners”. We all need to acknowledge our sin in order to confess it to the Lord and receive forgiveness. If we deny our sins and short-comings, we are negating our need for Jesus’s sacrifice.

The beautiful thing about recovery is that God is not done with us yet. Jeremiah 29:11 says “‘For I know the plans I have for you’, declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’.” God has a purpose for your life, the things that you have gone through, all have purpose. In the moment of being in a trial, it’s so hard to see that God can possibly use what you’re going through. But God can see the big picture, usually we can’t until time has passed and sometimes, we don’t see the full picture until we are with God in Heaven. We must remember that we only see the finite...the here and now. God sees eternity. God can use anything, even our failures, to help us grow and to advance His Kingdom. What an amazing, powerful, beautiful God we have that someone’s worst trial can bring another to Christ. The things that we go through allow us to touch the hearts and souls of individuals that maybe we couldn’t, had we not gone through them.

But how do we receive that healing, joy, and peace? The answer is Jesus. Life, especially now, is messy. It is messy and angry and loud. Fear and anger have made it hard to hear anything but things of this world. Colossians 3: 1-3 says, “Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” We need to keep our eyes on Jesus and build our relationship with Him.

When I was little, my mom taught us some trick photography. One of the things we would do was to put one of us kids up a bit on a hill while the other stood close to the

photographer with a toy bucket. With the proper angling and distance, we could take a picture in which it would look like the person on the hill was a tiny little person, standing inside of this very large bucket. Of course, the sibling on the hill hadn't changed in size, they were simply so far away that they looked tiny and the bucket was so close that it looked huge. That's kinda how it is with our relationship to God. When we are far from him, he appears small and insignificant compared to the "big" items of this world. However, if we draw near to him and keep the things of this world in the background, he appears in his actual, gigantic size and towers over everything else. It is so easy to look around at the world and question where God is in all of this. But we need to shift our perspective so God is in the forefront, instead of the world. And by doing this, we will be filled with God's love and peace that we can then go and share unto the world as we are commanded.

Now, a good relationship requires good communication. It is simply hard to be close to someone you never talk to. A relationship requires spending time together, and in the case of a relationship with Christ, that means spending time in his word, in meditation, and in prayer. The Bible contains God's will and, according to 2 Timothy 3:16 is "God-breathed". The Bible is nourishment, as described in Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." It instructs us in righteousness as described in Psalm 119:9, "How can a young man clean his way? By taking heed according to your word." It contains the power to overcome as it is described in Ephesians 6:17 as the sword of the Spirit. Spending time in His word is spending time listening to God. Meditating on his Word is considering what he said and listening for his voice to speak to you. Spending time in prayer is us talking to God as well as listening for his voice. God wants a relationship with us and that requires two-way communication.

At Anchor of Hope, these are the things we focus on and are the things I challenge you to focus on in your own lives, whatever your joys, sorrows, struggles, or victories may be. Remember the answer to your recovery from sin, whatever the sin, is Jesus. It is Jesus who brings peace. It is Jesus who gives joy. It is Jesus who heals us from sin's consequences. It is our goal at Anchor of Hope to walk alongside each other as we travel through life and all its struggles this side of eternity, and encourage each other with the promises of God while helping each other to avoid temptations which seek to pull us away from keeping Jesus the focus of our

lives. I pray that we draw close to God and abide in Him and his word. And I pray that we may all grow in our knowledge and love of God as we faithfully serve Him. Amen.