

THE ENCOURAGER

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF HUDSON CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Our struggle against sin can be incredibly discouraging. I recently came across this article, and I found it a helpful reminder. I hope it also encourages you in this struggle against sin that we are constantly engaged in.

Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. - Hebrews 12:3-4

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You Can Win the War Against Sin



Photo courtesy of philmoser.com

If you're a Christian, you know war. War with your pride, war with your lust, war with your anger. War at home, war at work, war when you're alone. War in your head, war in your heart, war in your mouth.

Kill one enemy, and another takes its place. Fight your way up one hill, and ten more rise up behind it. Let up your vigilance for one hour, and you've lost ground. Day after day, week after week, month after month, with no end in sight.

Perhaps in the pitch of battle, when the enemies inside you feel unrelenting, you've wondered, "Is this normal? Is this really the Christian life — this endless trudging, this constant watchfulness, this ruthless denial of so much within me?" In these moments, Christ our commander comes alongside us with three reminders: the war is normal, the war is winnable, and the war will end.

The War Is Normal

Consider the condition of your heart before God rescued you: dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), captive to ungodly passions and pleasures (Titus 3:3), blind to the beauty of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4), walking in ruin and misery (Romans 3:16). Your heart was Sauron's Mount Doom, the White Witch's winter, Babylon's stronghold. You may have known peace, but it was peace with enemies of God.

But then the Holy Spirit beat down the gates of your heart and expelled sin from the throne. Now, he's taking his army through all the corners of your life. Until he annihilates every enemy outpost, you will be a man or woman at war (Galatians 5:17).

So don't be surprised if you wake up to war. Don't be surprised if you sometimes feel like death inside, as if everything you've loved needs to be laid in the grave. Don't be surprised if you discover lairs of darkness in your flesh you never dreamed possible.

Instead, take heart. The war is normal. More than that, the war is essential. Battle is an indispensable mark of all who have declared open rebellion against sin and Satan. As J.C. Ryle writes, "We are evidently no friends of Satan. Like the kings of this world, he wars not against his own subjects. The very fact that he assaults us, should fill our minds with hope" (Holiness, 76).



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The War Is Winnable

In the agony of battle, you may feel utterly burdened beyond your strength, like defeat is all you will ever know. You may feel like giving up altogether.

We would have every reason to surrender to these feelings if the war belonged to us. In our own strength, we are infants fighting dragons. But the battle does not ultimately belong to us — it belongs to Christ, our captain. And that makes the war winnable.

When God saved you, he did not send a radio communication into your prison cell, commanding you to stand up and fight. No, Jesus himself broke into your prison, placed a sword in your hand, and said, "Follow me. Stay near me. I'll lead you out." Therefore, as Richard Sibbes writes, "Let us look not so much at who our enemies are as at who our judge and captain is, nor at what they threaten, but at what he promises" (The Bruised Reed, 122). And what does he promise?

- He will be with you in every battle (Matthew 28:20).
- He will uphold you with his righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).
- He will sanctify you completely (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Stick near Christ's side, and sin will have no dominion over you. Pride withers under his majesty. Lust cowers beneath his beauty. Anger trembles at his sight. You may gain ground only by inches, and the battle may last a lifetime, but Jesus's presence and promises guarantee your progress. He will lead you home.

So don't despair, no matter how shaky you feel today. The war is winnable. With God's help, you can resist. You can reclaim ground from the enemy and turn thorny fields into gardens. Jesus has pledged his help for every fight you face today. **Will you trust him?**



The War Will End

God did not save you so you could wage eternal warfare. The streets of the New Jerusalem will not be lined with ranks of soldiers. This war, entrenched as it is right now, is merely the prologue to your eternal peace.

One day soon, the tumult of battle will give way to hallelujah choruses. The civil war within you will end in cease-fire under God's reign. No wayward thoughts will disquiet you; no rogue desires will distress you; no nagging temptations will torment you.

"After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (1 Peter 5:10). This war of fifty, sixty, or seventy years, as endless as it feels, is just "a little while" from the standpoint of eternity. Fight a little while, resist a little while, deny yourself a little while, and you will rejoice forever.

So don't give up. The war will end. Jesus has already won the decisive victory (Colossians 2:15). The enemy knows his time is short (Revelation 12:12). The outcome of this battle is not uncertain. God will soon crush every enemy of yours under his feet (Micah 7:19; Romans 16:20).

Day by Day

If a lifetime of war feels overwhelming, focus on today's fight. Labor to put to death today's discontentment, today's envy, today's self-pity. And do it by grabbing hold of today's weapons — today's promises from God, today's opportunities for prayer, today's co-soldiers in the battle.

Day by day, your commander will supply the strength you need to overcome your enemies, and the forgiveness you need for every defeat. Just don't stop fighting. "None is here overcome but he that will not fight," Sibbes writes (The Bruised Reed, 122).

The war is normal, the war is winnable, and the war will end. And then, exceeding and ever-increasing joy.

- Pastor Brandon Current



Summary of the Deacons & Elders Meeting February 8, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m. The members present were Brandon Current, Donnie McKinley, Dave McGraw, and Larry Dowden. The meeting was opened in prayer by Donnie McKinley.

The meeting minutes from January 9, 2018, were reviewed and approved. The financial reports were reviewed and approved.

The Worship Team had no report.

The Education Team reported that the Sunday school offering will now be collected in a box placed in the foyer between the sanctuary and Sunday school classes upstairs. The collection will be for a specific mission for a specified time or amount.

The Building Team reported:

1. The agenda for the first meeting of the Building Team is scheduled for Sunday, February 25, at noon.
2. The maintenance and repairs and approved lists were reviewed.
3. The parking lot expansion was discussed, and it was decided to be of lesser priority than other items for now. It will be added to the wish list for future consideration.
4. The establishment of quarterly building inspection was presented.
5. The wish list was reviewed.
6. Brandon presented a spreadsheet for HCC assets with projected costs and life expectancy, allowing us to plan for items like the furnace, AC, roof, etc. Budgeting amounts are to be paid into the building fund regularly which will allow us to pay for items as they need to be replaced or repaired.
7. The HCC key policy was discussed, and the possibility of a keyless entry type lock was discussed.

The Mission Team had no report.

Food Pantry team reported that the annual Midwest Food Bank survey has been completed. There were nine new families at last Saturday's food pantry including two from Kappa and one from Hudson.

Brandon gave his Pastor's Report with summary of his activities. In keeping with the purpose of membership as an active and accountable relationship with the church, and with the historical precedent as found in the earliest membership book of the church, we voted to remove 162 individuals from our membership rolls. These names will remain in the log for historical purposes but are now listed as one of the following: "Removed - Stopped Attending, Lost Contact," "Removed - Moved without request for transfer," or "Removed - Changed Church without request for transfer."

HCC will be hosting the combined Hudson area Good Friday service this year.

Old Business:

1. The installation of new projectors for the sanctuary has been completed.
2. The Ladies Aid minutes were reviewed.

New Business:

1. The development of an Emergency Response Plan for weather, fire evacuation and armed intruder was discussed. Brandon and several others from HCC attended a Safe Worship Seminar at College Park CC on Sunday January 28. There is another seminar planned for later this year also. It was decided that we will focus on building security and training of the greeters and servers.
2. After discussion, the purchase of an AED will be added to the HCC wish list for a future consideration.
3. An HCC planning calendar has been developed to help keep track of items that should be done on a periodic basis.
4. A Special Worship Service Seating Area has been set up in the library downstairs. The audio speaker that was downstairs in the north-west corner was moved to the library. Communion will be available there and anyone desiring to use this area is welcome.
5. The Comlara Park Maple shelter is reserved for our Easter Sunrise Service on April 1.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m. and was closed in prayer by Dave McGraw.

Mission of the Month – ISU Encounter

Encounter (first known as Christian Collegians) was founded at Illinois State University in 1968. What began as a small collaboration between students and local churches has, over the years, grown into a parachurch ministry with significant impact both on campus and beyond.

The first campus minister of “Christian Collegians” was David Lang, a well-known author and publisher. Under his leadership, a two story house was purchased near campus at 300 Normal Ave, near the Bone Student Center. David was succeeded by Jim Simkins in 1973, who rallied students and supporters to put a new building on the ministry property that was more conducive to student life. Jim led the ministry for 23 years.

Pete and Paulette Cocco serve with ISU Encounter “a rooted, thriving ministry for college students at Illinois State.” They came to work with the ministry at ISU in 1996, after spending a year in Hungary and a year in the Philippines. They have five children - Micah, Mattea, Kordell, Judah, and Wren. Paulette works full time with State Farm insurance. Pete is in his 18th year of campus ministry at ISU.

Over the past two decades, Encounter has planted three campus ministries in the Philippines. Each of those ministries has full time Filipino staff, all a part of our budget and given oversight by our Board of Directors. Arnold Pasion, a native of Baguio on the island of Luzon, is our director there.

Beyond the details above, there have been countless volunteers and students that have made this place thrive – years of changed lives that have provided the nourishing soil for others to grow and deepen their faith. Our desire is to continue to be a rooted, thriving ministry for college students at Illinois State, to press Jesus deep into them so that the Gospel will take root in every corner of the world!

Our HCC Coordinator is Donnie McKinley. For more information about this ministry, go to:

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March 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h2 style="color: green;">March Birthdays</h2> <p> Fran Marmor 3/8 Jeremiah Dowden 3/16 Allen Trantina 3/17 Evelyn Shiner 3/27 </p>				1	2	3
4 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:45 a.m. Coffee/Donuts 11:00 a.m. Sunday School 11:45 a.m. 1st Sunday Potluck	5	6	7 10:00 a.m. Ladies' Prayer and Fellowship 6:30 p.m. Adult Prayer 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study 7:00 p.m. The Potter's Kids	8 Food Pantry Preparation Day 5:30 p.m. Deacons/Elders Meeting followed by Spiritual Focus Meeting	9	10 10:00 Food Pantry
11 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:45 a.m. Coffee/Donuts 11:00 a.m. Sunday School	12	13	14 10:00 a.m. Ladies' Prayer and Fellowship 6:30 p.m. Adult Prayer 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study 7:00 p.m. The Potter's Kids	15	16	17
18 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:45 a.m. Coffee/Donuts 11:00 a.m. Sunday School	19	20 9:00 a.m. Ladies Aid	21 10:00 a.m. Ladies' Prayer and Fellowship 6:30 p.m. Adult Prayer 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study 7:00 p.m. The Potter's Kids	22	23	24
25 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:45 a.m. Coffee/Donuts 11:00 a.m. Sunday School	26	27	28 10:00 a.m. Ladies' Prayer and Fellowship 6:30 p.m. Adult Prayer 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study 7:00 p.m. The Potter's Kids	29	30 <b style="color: green;">Good Friday 7:00 p.m. Joint Worship Service at HCC	31