

# Abide in **LOVE** Live with **PURPOSE**

STEWARDSHIP 2025 | WEEKLY REFLECTION FROM OUR MEMBERS



## THE STUMBLING BLOCK

BY LYNDA EDWARDS

**WARNING:** The following selection contains references mutilation, amputation, sea drowning by millstone, and burning in a fiery hell where the worm never dies.

We open with a sullen and quarrelsome disciple group who feel that an outsider has crossed the line. John told Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." I am sure he was expecting encouragement and a pat on the back for the actions the disciple took to stop the intruder. They soon discovered that Jesus was alarmed with their behavior and their attitudes not with the outsider who chose to successfully cast out demons in Jesus' name. The disciples were then harshly warned that if they continued with their elitist behavior that created stumbling blocks to the new believers that they should be hung with a millstone around their neck and thrown into the sea. If they continued to see strangers as a threat to their status, power and recognition they should cut out their eye. If their hand or foot gets in God's way chop it off and throw it away. You're better off maimed or lame and alive than be the proud owner of two hands and two feet, godless in a furnace of eternal fire. This is a parable about prevention not punishment. Stop doing whatever is causing you or others to stumble.

My first year as a deaf educator saw a growth in our population and required a larger campus.

## SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 SELECT READINGS

### Mark 9: 38-50

John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

"For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another."

The alarms sounded in the hearts and minds of the faculty of the new larger campus. There was a demand to view our classrooms and a tour was put on the calendar. I felt like a caged animal in the zoo while the visiting group of defensive teachers visited us that day. Deaf education represented a threat to their campus, reputation and status in the community. We were the interlopers who did not belong. Once the move was completed the following years built not a simple stumbling block but a total wall of unacceptance. There were separate P.E. classes, separate Christmas and Spring Programs and a designated hallway where all the deaf education classes were held. We were all educators. We had the same purpose. What were they scared of? Deafness is not contagious. Their eyes did not see us, they didn't use their feet to walk down our halls, they didn't lend a helping hand. I feel for the guy who the chosen Twelve admonished. I have been there.

Time brings healing, administrations change and we developed acceptance at the campus. Shared values, educational goals and most importantly lifelong friendships are what I have today. Our program was nationally ranked. We were televised on World News highlighting the success of a deaf student excelling at basketball. (He looked great on film; me, not so much!) I had a purpose to include my students, to enrich their lives and provide them with tools to build their futures.

### **The Stumbling Block**

The philosopher Nietzsche stated: He who has a "why" in life can tolerate almost any "how". Having a strong sense of purpose in life can give us the strength and resilience to endure any stumbling block that comes our way. It is worthwhile, then, to look at our lives and define our "why" in order to stay motivated and in turn, stay true to ourselves while helping others.

Father Paul stated that abiding in love is to exist in love and emulate the presence of Christ. I am so proud to be a member of the church on the hill that extends its hand to the needs of the community. Most of all I want to thank the entire congregation for the care you have given me and my family. It has been a rough few years but with my faith, my church and the support of the Prayer Warriors I have never felt alone. God bless you all.

AMEN



Lynda Edwards has been a member of Ascension for over 30 years. Her twins were baptized here and that favorite pic has never left the fireplace mantle. After 34 years she retired from the Mesquite Regional Day School for the Deaf where she served as Dept Chair. She was a mentor and tutor for Rainbow Days, a nonprofit for homeless children. She loved her time working at the Ascension Day School. Lynda is an avid reader, and enjoys gym workouts, gardening, writing poetry and flower arranging.

