

**Monday, March 11** – *“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”* (2 Corinthians 3:17) What kind of freedom is this talking about? This is the freedom that only a relationship can provide. This is the freedom to be able to walk in the front door, unannounced, without ringing the doorbell. This is the freedom of being able to call at any hour and the phone will be answered. This is the freedom to be able to talk about anything, knowing that you will be embraced. This is the freedom that can only be experienced in a relationship. Acquaintances don't experience this freedom. People who once knew each other don't experience this freedom. This is the freedom of a right relationship in the here and now. This is the freedom that needs no explaining, defending or rationalizing. This is the freedom to be who you are right out in front of the other. God is offering this kind of freedom to you through Jesus Christ.

**Tuesday, March 12** – *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28) Sometimes life just seems to be too much to bear. Sometimes you just want some rest, a break, a chance to catch your breath. You long for a lazy river on a hot afternoon and an innertube in which to settle yourself. Bad news – life is messy and you are going to experience trials and tribulations. Good news – when you do experience trials and tribulation, God embraces you and offers you rest. All you have to do is come to him. And that is the catch, isn't it? If God loved me so much why wouldn't he just give me rest? Why do I have to come to him? God knows everything. Thus, God knows that I need rest. If God truly loved me he would give me the rest before I even sought it out. More good news - God has already given you the rest, all you need to do is claim it through faith in Jesus. You don't find rest because you deserve it. You find rest because God freely offers it.

**Wednesday, March 13** – *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”* (John 14:27) So, how does the world give and how does this giving differ from God's giving? The world gives with a catch. When you receive, in the way the world gives, you will someday need to return the favor. Scratch my back and I will scratch yours mentality. The world always gives with an ulterior motive. The world gives because it wants something or it gives because it wants to make sure that in the future it can get something. There is no catch with God. God's embrace is not quid pro quo. God will not, does not and has never given in order to get something in return or to stockpile favors that can be claimed at some future point. God gives because God is love. Thus, your heart need not be troubled or you need not be afraid for God isn't going to come back on you someday because of the peace he gives you today.

**Thursday, March 14** – *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18) Knowing that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence gives you peace on this side. When you are laying in a hospital bed in pain or when your kids are driving you crazy or when you are studying for that big test; what keeps you going is the greener grass on the other side. When you are healed and back to your normal life or when your kids are wonderful or when you pass that big test. It is the same with God. All of the suffering, all the trials, all the tribulation pale in comparison to the embrace of God through the Holy Spirit that gives you peace in the midst of life. Not to mention your eternal life in heaven where there are no more tears, no more suffering, no more sickness. Heaven, where the grass is truly greener!

**Friday, March 15** – *“The human spirit can endure in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?”* (Proverbs 18:14) Your spirit can endure sickness, but once your spirit is crushed what is left? What will crush your spirit? A long list of “tions” - rejection, condemnation, separation, isolation, frustration, discrimination, manipulation, humiliation, persecution, dysfunction, corruption, exhaustion, violation, addiction, extortion... A crushed spirit forces you to the end of your rope. When you get there forget the notion of enduring and consider surrendering. You win, when you are embraced by God and you will only be embraced by God when you stop enduring and start surrendering. You can't bear a crushed spirit and if it hasn't happened yet, it will happen at some point. When it does (or if it already has) walk away from the notion of enduring and walk toward the notion of surrendering. Allow God to embrace you.

**Entry Ticket: “You win when \_\_\_\_\_.”**

Loss = The \_\_\_\_\_ when deprived of someone or something of value.

Can someone grieve a loss while knowing it is for the best?

How can God \_\_\_\_\_ you if you never acknowledge your need for \_\_\_\_\_?

“Do you believe in this thing or not?”