



# STAYING STRONG

April 2024

## WELCOME SPRING

This Month's Topics:

"A Tale of Two Sheep "

"God's Articulate Presence"

Self-Care Corner

Laughter is the Best Medicine

The Importance of Staying Connected

Bible Verse::

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

### A TALE OF TWO SHEEP

Let me tell you a story about two sheep. Their names are Ray Ray and Lambini. Ray Ray was born with no eyes, but she is able to navigate her world in much the same way that blind humans do. Her heightened senses help, including her sense of smell. She has tracked every nook and cranny of her world by feel and smell and can beeline her way to the shelter whenever rain comes or when breakfast is served.

But there is another challenge Ray Ray faces. With all the other sheep around, Ray Ray must sift through the noise and chatter around her. That's where her buddy, Lambini, comes in. Lambini wears a bell. Ray Ray is tuned in to Lambini's bell at all times. She can disregard the unnecessary noise around her and follow Lambini's bell. Although she cannot see Lambini, she trusts him to lead her where she should go. She trusts him not to take her to dangerous places or allow her to stray. I would bet that Ray Ray knows the sound of Lambini's bleating as much as she does his bell.

As I read this story, I cannot help thinking about how we, as Christians, could learn a lesson or two from Ray Ray. She must utilize her God-given abilities to their fullest: her keen sense of smell, instincts, and determined parameters. She must still the noise around her, cut through the chatter, and listen. And she must exercise faith. *"Now faith is confidence in that we hope for and assurance about that we do not see."* (Hebrews 11:1)

I especially like the idea of how Ray Ray must still the noise and cut through the chatter to listen. Oh, that we would tune our ears and hearts to listen to what God has to say and not the world or some misguided individual. *"My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me."* (John 10:27)

**St. John's Lutheran Church, 2415 Silas Creek Parkway, Winston-Salem, NC 27103**  
**#336-725-1651 [stjohnswws.org](http://stjohnswws.org)**

Why do we listen to people who give no thought to the Lord? Why do we allow ourselves to get worked up with the temporal things of this world? If we place our faith in God and trust His ways, why don't we take the time to listen to what He has to say to us?

God has something to say to us, but we must still the noise and cut through the chatter to seek Him and listen. Then we must have faith. Like Ray Ray, our faith can be strengthened through blind obedience and focused listening.

Karen Allen / Ewe R Blessed Ministries



### **GOD'S ARTICULATE PRESENCE**

I love Post-It Notes! Yellow, fuchsia, turquoise, buttercup, and magenta. From full-page mega notes to tiny little strips, sticky notes have saved me from embarrassment, kept me organized, and helped me memorize. Mostly, they have served as visual reminders of information, events, and appointments not to forget.

But visual reminders of things not to forget didn't begin with Post-It Notes. They began with God, Himself. All through life God places Post-It Notes on our days to remind us of Him. Just today, I jotted down a few Post-It Notes God placed throughout my day:

- The sunrise with swirls of mist rising from the lake behind my home;
- A vibrant red male cardinal and his demure wife sharing the bird feeder;
- Boisterous Canadian geese flying in V-formation across the sky;
- Tulip bulbs peeping through the ground;
- Dogwood blossoms heralding Easter's approach;
- The weeping willow praising God in the breeze;
- A monarch butterfly perched on the windowsill;
- Midday sunlight dancing on the water;
- A baby's cry;
- A little girl's giggle;
- Orange, magenta and red streaks across the sky as the sun bids goodnight;
- A sliver of white in the inky sky with a smattering of twinkles all around;
- My husband's hand reaching for me in the night.

Each and every one of these sightings were God's reminders to me that He has infused my life with His presence. Through His creation, God longs for us to see and discover – observe and remember – His creative beauty.

Sharon Jaynes / Equipping Women to Live Fully and Free

What do your Post-It Notes look like?

**Easter is a reminder that God is in the business of awakening hope in the hearts of people who feel hopeless.**

**He does this in ways that only he can do. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of the Gospel and the resurrection hope.**

## INSPIRATIONAL QUOTATION

"April hath put a spirit of youth in everything." William Shakespeare

Approach life with a fresh perspective, and let your spirit rejuvenate like the spring season.



## SELF-CARE CORNER

The goal of self-care is reducing stress and feeling recharged. You have to make that a priority so that you can be your best self. When you take care of yourself, you are more prepared to help others in your life and find joy doing it. St. Paul gives a great formula for reducing stress and recharging in Philippians 4:6-7. He writes: "Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

### Set a Positive Morning Intention

*Would you like to start your days with more energy and purpose?* Try setting the tone with a positive intention.

It's a phrase you repeat to yourself first thing in the morning. You can use the same one each day – or change it up.

It can be anything that matters to you. Close our eyes, breathe deeply and repeat a phrase like:

- ★ I am ready for today's challenges with God's help..
- ★ Praise God from whom all blessings flow!.
- ★ Thanks to God's love, my worries do not control me.
- ★ I am grateful for this beautiful God-given day.

Always remember:

Self-care is not selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel. ‘

Finding and affirming your true value, worth, and wealth is a matter of self-care which allows us to express compassion, loving kindness, and true generosity to others. And where does this love come from? "We love because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19. From this love that God has for us flows our love for God, our love for others, and our love for ourselves.

The thankful heart opens our eyes to a multitude of blessings that continually surround us.

## LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE

What happened when the turkey got into a fight? He got the stuffing knocked out of him.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF STAYING CONNECTED

Isolation and loneliness are not just sad situations. They have been shown to increase the likelihood of dementia, depression, and heart disease in older adults. Even early death. Below are some ideas to boost connection. Some require technology. Others do not. Here are some ways that we can help each other:

- **Video Calls.**
- **Old-fashioned snail mail.**
- **Telephone calls with an activity.**
- **Explore reminiscence activities.**
- **Consider a telephone check-in service.**
- **Communicate with neighbors, friends and relatives. Don't wait for calls to come to you, pick up that phone and call someone! Our phones *have* become one of our best friends!**