

- I. Anyone here been on a summer trip yet? How was packing? Was your car loaded down with stuff because you needed to make sure you were prepared for whatever might happen? Headed to the beach, and you packed a winter jacket because well you never know. I was a Boy Scout and was always taught to be prepared so I understand.
- II. Earlier this year, Katherine, the boys, and I made our first trip to Disney World, along with Katherine's mother. The car was loaded to the hilt. Over three days we visited three out of the four parks. We had packed multiple changes of clothes for the boys per day; snacks to help the keep costs down in the park, and so the boys didn't turn into gremlins on the trip down and back; toys for who knows what reason; long sleeve t-shirts and jackets for cool mornings and nights, because we were planning to stay all day, to get every dime out of those tickets.
- III. After our trip, I told Katherine that was the last time we were going to Disney until they finish the new Star Wars addition in a couple years, and it means the boys will be a little bit older, and will be able to ride all the rides they want. However, the downside is we won't be able to bring the stroller along which was a big bonus of having a two-year-old with us. We loaded that thing up each day for the mission ahead. We piled our jackets, snacks, change clothes onto it, so much so that even when Tucker was taking a nap in it, it looked like we had a small child buried in there. Next time we go, we'll have to be more selective with what we bring because we'll be limited to what we can carry, and the last thing I want to do is lug around an 80 pound backpack for 3 or 4 days.
- IV. When going on summer vacation we tend to err on the side of caution, and overpack. If we're taking our vehicle we might as pack it as full as we can right? You have a roof rack? Even better! Put the kids on top, and more stuff inside. Those of you making your trips by plane don't have such a luxury. You have to be picky with what you pack so you don't end up getting hit with those dreaded baggage fees. You have to be thoughtful with every piece, or you can get creative and work around the problem.
- V. I have seen countless people approach the attendant's desk at the gate to make sure this was the right flight or ask some basic question, and the attendant would notice the person loaded down with bags. The attendant, trying to be a modern day Jesus and limit what passengers could bring on the plane, would say, "Excuse me, we only allow each passenger to bring one carry-on item." Folks would respond, "Oh this?" Pointing to one large backpack. "This is my purse, this one over here is my computer case, and the rolling suitcase that's my one item. And no I will not be gate checking any of these items, that's for the coach passengers."
- VI. The disciples weren't blessed with such technological advances for their journey. People in their day either had to carry their belongings themselves, put it on an animal, or have the animal drag it behind them. And the more they carried the longer their travel would take, which created more opportunities for bandits and thieves to rob them. And of course, you had to have food and water for the animals. It was a whole thing. In addition to these obvious difficulties of travel during biblical times, Jesus makes matters a little more difficult for the disciples and gives them an extremely limited packing list.

Jesus instructs them that on their mission they may only carry a staff, and the pair of sandals and tunic they had on.

- VII. Seeing a packing list like this would send a chill down many of our spines, as I'm sure it did for the disciples. "Wait Jesus, you mean I can't bring food, extra clothes, or money? What about a carry-on item? Or my phone? Please Jesus I need my phone! How will I communicate!?!?" Let me put your mind at ease. The packing list suggested here should not be extrapolated out for us to use today. As one commentator points out, "These are emergency instructions for a swift and dangerous mission. These commands are specific to Jesus' own day, and the setting of his mission in first-century Palestine."<sup>1</sup> But in my mind what can be pulled from this text for us today, is that we are to bring for our journey of discipleship, and mission and evangelism only that which is essential.
- VIII. I know what you're thinking, food is essential, money is essential, clothes are essential, and Jesus left all these essentials out! But Jesus commanded the disciples to go and heal the sick and proclaim the good news. He is charging the disciples to go and form relationships with others. Those that are receptive to the message you bring will share table with you, they will invite you in and be hospitable and care for you, as you change their lives by bringing not only physical healing, but a spiritual new beginning.
- IX. As we see in this text the road ahead for the disciples will not always be easy. They will come across those who are not receptive to their message, who will ridicule them and cast them out. The story of Jesus' own rejection within his hometown was helpful for the disciples to witness and have experienced, as they begin their own journey. Jesus' own hometown, his own family even, rejected the truth he preached! James, who will become a "great leader in the Jerusalem church, the anchorman of early Christianity while Peter and Paul were off on their travels around the world."<sup>2</sup> Yet, here he mocks his older brother, and denies what Jesus has come to share. This scene sets the stage for Jesus' command to the disciples to keep moving when rejected, shake off the dust in their sandals not only to mark the place, but so you can forget about the ridicule you've received; so you can literally "shake it off, shake it off." In order to be faithful missionaries and evangelists the disciples can't be weighed down by burdens of what might have been, they must keep moving physically, and mentally and spiritually. Honestly, not being weighed down emotionally and spiritually might be harder than letting go of our overstuffed suitcases.
- X. At times we can feel overwhelmed by the weight of the world, the weight of our church. We try to work out where the Lord is calling us, and how we are to respond to the needs of the world, and our own community. Jill Duffield, editor of *The Presbyterian Outlook*, writes, "It can feel at times like we're hitting wall after wall, real or proposed. Our sandals are worn, our tunics stained, our feet and bodies and minds and spirits, weary. We think to ourselves, maybe it would be best to give up and go back home. Bury ourselves in the distractions of cell phones, laptops, like-minded Twitter rants and feel-

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<sup>1</sup> Wright, N.T., *Mark for Everyone*

<sup>2</sup> Wright, N.T. *Mark for Everyone*

good videos on Facebook. Forget shaking off the dust. How about a nice, hot shower that washes it down the drain, and lets us be free of it forever.”

- XI. It can feel at times like we are in *The Matrix* faced with the decision of taking the blue pill or the red pill. “Take the blue pill – the story ends you wake up in your bed believe whatever you want to believe. Take the red pill – you stay in Wonderland and see how deep the rabbit hole goes.” In other words, take the blue pill and sink back into the security of this life forget about the stresses and problems of those around you. Forget about each of our callings to serve someone higher than ourselves. Or, or, take the red pill and be awake to what Christ truly wants for your life, and then go about your life charged with following and sharing his instructions. We must keep moving, keep preaching, keep shining the light of Christ into our world untethered to that which would hold us back from achieving our primary objectives: loving the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, and strength and love our neighbor as we love ourself. Or as the Westminster Catechism states it: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”
- XII. We are only able to live life in such a manner by concentrating our efforts on what is important to the life of this church, in our corner of Tallahassee. In order to be an effective church, and effective disciples we must hone our focus on that which we are passionate, that which is life giving. As I mentioned last week one of my goals is to visit each member by the end of the year. So far I’ve had four meetings with folk, and I hope if you haven’t signed-up for a meeting yet, I would encourage you to do so using the blue sheets in the office following the service, or whenever you have your calendar handy. But one of the questions I’ve been asking, and will continue to ask, is what are your hopes and dreams for this church? Answers to that question have so far coalesced around drawing in new folk, and deepening discipleship for existing membership. There is not a shortage of ideas for how to do this work in the church, but in carrying out mission and evangelism, and strengthening our community we must be true to who we are, we cannot focus on the superfluous.
- XIII. Often times when churches go on journeys of self-discovery they can get lost in other ideas: an idea for small groups that meet at the church weekly becomes the impetus for renovating the Christian Education wing, or worse for a new building campaign. Suggestions for retooling worship lead to fog machines and disco balls in the sanctuary, and churches lose focus on who they are as a church. Remember pack what is only essential, and let go of the physical and emotional things that might weigh you down. When you pack the essentials you can focus on what is important to the life of the church, to your life as a disciple of Christ.
- XIV. Where do we see Christ sending us to serve and share the love of Christ? Every church, every Christian proclaims “Jesus is Lord.” But what makes us Fellowship Presbyterian Church?

- XV. Let us be focused on this mission of discernment and allow ourselves to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to see God's will be done, and boldly go about the difficult work of carrying it out.