



ADVENTURE JOURNAL

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Living the Adventure Ministries seeks to work for the transformation of the world through the awakening of the Church, evangelistic preaching, and Christian people putting their faith into action through mission experiences around the world.

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Minimal and Essential

The minimalist life is "living with things you really need. It means removing anything that distracts us from living with intentionality and freedom"

(www.becomingminimalist.com). It is a lifestyle that seems to me to be easily spoken and written, but difficult to execute. The minimalist lifestyle calls for a measure of fasting and heart change to move from a life focused on possessions to a life focused on the more important aspects of life.

A similar way of living life is called *Essentialism* which is defined: "a disciplined, systematic approach for determining where our highest point of contribution lies, then making execution of those things almost effortless" (*Essentialism*, Page 7). The basic tenets of essentialism include discernment, decision-making, daring, and subtracting. In essentialism, a person looks to where they can make the best investment of time, energy, gifts, and talents to live their best life.

When put together, the minimalist lifestyle and the essentialist lifestyle invite us to a life where "no" is an acceptable answer to become more disciplined and "less is more" becomes a mantra for life where material possessions become less important. As we approach Ash Wednesday, I believe minimalist and essentialism principles can guide our understanding of the Lenten Adventure.

In Matthew 6:16-21 we read:

"And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The discipline of fasting serves as a practice of limiting oneself or ridding oneself of certain behaviors, actions, or consumption for a season and putting an intentional focus on prayer, Bible Study, and other spiritual practices. This minimization of distractions invites us to put our treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves cannot break in and steal. The discipline of fasting recalibrates our normal life-practices to become better focused on Jesus. We also become better focused on our identity in Christ and our relationship with one another.

As we approach the Lenten Adventure, I am focusing on a life of fasting experienced through practices of minimalism and essentialism. I will focus each day (Monday through Saturday) on one of the areas of my life: physical, mental, emotional, relational, spiritual, and financial. I will be spending time in reducing the distractions in my life in each of these areas (i.e. culling through my closet to remove excessive amounts of clothes; not eating certain meals in the week and spending time in Bible Study and prayer during those normal meal times; turning off electronics to spend more time with family and friends; auditing my subscriptions and the way I spend money; etc.). Each day in the week will have a focus. I realize there will be overlap between the practices, but I want the intentionality to focus on each area in hopes of growing in my relationship with God, with others, and with myself.

How will you be practicing the Lenten Adventure in 2024? Will you be giving something up? Will you be taking up more time for spiritual disciplines? How is God calling you to a life of less stuff? I would love to hear about your Lenten Adventure. Please share any insights. I would enjoy praying with you. You can send your insights to: matt@livingtheadventure.net or 618-830-6670.

Prayer: Lord, I have accumulated a lot of unnecessary things in my life. They become a distraction. Forgive me for emphasizing my treasures on earth. I confess I have allowed those treasures on earth to become more important than you at times. Forgive me and set me free from the distractions. I want to live my life for you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Malawi Ministry

Last year's visit to Malawi opened new doors on the continent of Africa for Living the Adventure Ministries. The microcredit ministry is beginning this month. We are grateful to the people who made contributions to this new ministry. We will give reports on the efficacy of this new opportunity as women and men begin to create income from the expansion of their trade or through beginning new businesses.

I am excited to learn that the village where we will be starting the new microcredit has erected a temporary building for their local church. We are in conversation about building a church which would serve as a pre-school during the week and a church in the evening and on the weekend. The cost for this building is still being determined, but one of the great gifts is brick-making is a skill already practiced in the village, so our cost for resources will be less than if we had to transport these supplies into the village.

We are planning to return to Malawi at the end of August. Tentatively we have set August 30 to September 9 as the dates for this mission trip. We will likely be training pastors, leading a Christian Ashram, and establishing deeper relationships in the local villages. The cost is yet to be determined, but if God is calling you to join me on this trip, please contact me (matt@livingtheadventure.net or 618-830-6670).

Guyana Ministry

When I was sitting with the team who traveled to Guyana in 2022, I was confronted with a statistic of which I was unaware. Guyana has one of the highest per capita suicide rates in the world. The need for suicide prevention has become a focused effort in the Guyanese government as a September 2022 bill decriminalized attempted suicide and placed an emphasis on a national suicide prevention plan. As we consider our next trip to Guyana, we are beginning conversations with the Bishop and Local Pastor with whom we work on how we can support a suicide prevention plan within the Guyana Methodist Church. We are also discussing how we can more intentionally engage in ministry in the local communities where the church is in ministry. We hope to have a clear plan for our trip established by the middle of March.

The dates for the trip are June 24-July 2. The cost is being finalized, but will likely be about \$2,000 per person. If you know someone who is feeling a call to travel in mission, this is a wonderful international opportunity. Last year we were able to engage with children and youth through an Arts Camp and hope to engage with many of these children and youth again in 2024. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact me (matt@livingtheadventure.net or 618-830-6670).

Upcoming Events

We are working on scheduling events for 2024. Contact us to plan an event.

Feb. 16-19 California Winter Christian Ashram
March 3-6 Carrier Mills Methodist Church Revival
March 10-13 Olney Immanuel UMC Revival
March 24 Xenia Christ United Church Palm Sunday
April 14 Nepton Community Church Revival (KY)
April 28 Norris City Baptist Church (AM/PM)

India Trip

When E. Stanley Jones asked Mahatma Gandhi how to bring Christianity to India, Gandhi gave him four points. One of those points challenged my thinking when I read, "Learn about other religions and study them more sympathetically to find out the good that is within them." Each year when I travel to India, I learn more about the Indian culture, Hindu religion, and ways brothers and sisters in Christ share Jesus with their family and friends.

I will be traveling again to India this year. We are finalizing the dates, but it will likely be September 24-October 12, 2024. We will visit tourism sites in Agra, Jaipur, and Delhi. We will also have opportunities to visit some of the ministry sites E. Stanley Jones started that are continuing to share Jesus with their community. Finally, we will spend one week at the Sat Tal Christian Ashram. These experiences make this a discipleship and spiritual growth trip. We are working to finalize the cost for the trip. If you are interested in traveling to India, please contact Matt (matt@livingtheadventure.net or 618-830-6670).

Family Update

Micah and Judah are back at their respective universities. Judah has started a job at Chik-fil-a on campus, while continuing to freelance on building and maintaining websites. Micah has started his new job on-campus as the equipment room manager for the Film and Broadcast department and as the assistant manager of the studio. He continues his work as a commentator for The Sporting Times in Kentucky broadcasting high school sports. We are proud of their accomplishments and covet your prayers for them as they balance work, school, and social life.

Isaiah's birthday is February 14. He will be 17. Judah's birthday is March 4. He will be 19.

Nancy's surgery in December was successful and she is back to work. Thank you for your prayers.

Night of Prayer and Praise

The room was filled with the Holy Spirit as a multigenerational congregation came together for worship and prayer at three different churches in Southeastern Illinois. We witnessed the power of healing through the testimonies of people. One person said, "Our church needed this. We have been waiting for something like this." Another person said, "I needed this tonight. Thank you for bringing this to our community."

I am grateful to the churches in Xenia, Carmi, and Albion for hosting the Night of Praise and Prayer. We are also grateful to people who made meals for the leaders to eat after the time of worship and prayer. We look forward to more opportunities to lead these events in local churches in the future. If your local church or ministry would like to host a Night of Prayer and Praise contact me (matt@livingtheadventure.net or 618-830-6670).

Haitian Art Store Open

We continue to have our Haitian Art Store open at Herschel Johnson Implement (652 IL Route 15, Albion). The store features unique artisan gifts made in Haiti. We have a wide variety of metal art hand made from 55-gallon drums. There are hand made bracelets, earrings, and necklaces. The sale of these gifts support Haitian artisans and Living the Adventure's mission ministry. Check out some of the items on our Facebook page.