

*Being joyful in hope, patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer...
and finding God in each other*

Florida-Bahamas Synod Assembly

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Game Plan

- ❑ The full Romans 12 chapter, for context
- ❑ Part I: Patient in Affliction
- ❑ Part II: Faithful in Prayer
- ❑ Part III: Joyful in Hope

Ground Rules

- ❑ A conversation, not a lecture
- ❑ All on the same side, the side of doing God's work
- ❑ None of us is perfect; we ALL fall short (more often than we are willing to acknowledge publicly!)
- ❑ This is a safe and non-judgmental place
- ❑ You do not have to share if you don't feel comfortable

Romans 12 in full, for context...

Humble Service in the Body of Christ

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: **Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought**, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ **so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.** ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your^[a] faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,^[b] do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Romans 12 continued...

Love in Action

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. **Honor one another above yourselves.** ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ **Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.**

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ **Live in harmony with one another.** Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. ^[c] Do not be conceited.

Romans 12 continued...

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^[d] says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

**"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.**

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."^[e]

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



Being joyful in hope...



...patient in affliction,

and faithful in prayer...



...Involves heeding the various other messages of Romans 12...

PART I

Patient in affliction

Shooting at Elementary School Devastates Community in South Texas

It was the deadliest school shooting since the 2012 massacre in Newtown, Conn.

Published May 24, 2022 Updated June 1, 2022, 10:30 p.m. ET

Give this article



NBC News

Suspect in racist Buffalo mass shooting indicted on murder, terrorism and hate crime charges

An 18-year-old man accused of killing 10 Black people and injuring three others in a racist attack at a New York grocery store was indicted...

6 hours ago



KSAT.com

Uvalde school shooting: At least 21 killed at Robb Elementary

Victims are still being identified; shooter was killed by law enforcement ... KSAT 12 News reporters bring you the latest coverage on the Uvalde...

1 week ago



The Guardian

US Covid deaths hit 1m, a death toll higher than any other country

Virus has laid bare America's fragmented healthcare system and corrosive racial and socioeconomic inequality.

2 weeks ago



BBC

Ukraine round-up: Long-range rockets and Kherson torture claims

The US says the missiles will strengthen Kyiv's negotiating stance as the war nears its 100th day.

6 hours ago



Surging gas prices show no signs of stopping in Florida

Currently, the average price of gas in Florida is \$4.62, but it likely won't last for long, according to an analyst with GasBuddy.com. Patrick...

1 day ago



Florida Leads the Way as Home Prices Defy Gravity, Rising 20.6% in March

“The Federal Reserve is trying to tame inflation and slow demand, leading to a slight normalizing of the housing market,” says Mark Fleming,...



Potential storm this weekend signals start to hurricane season ...

Overall, while the bad news is South Florida can expect a dreary first half of the weekend, the good news is heavy rainfall will contribute...

9 hours ago





...patient in affliction?

13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

16 Live in harmony with one another.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

21 Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.



13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

20 "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.



We give and help others without question...

- Because we are Christians
- Because we see Christ in our brothers and sisters
- Because we recognize that “therefore by the grace of God go I”
- Because someone helped us in our hour of need
- Why else?

But seeing Christ in our brothers and sisters...

...becomes harder the less our brothers and sisters “look” like us, “speak” like us, “dress” like us, “pray” like us, etc.

And this is **NORMAL**

Our brains are wired for self-preservation...

...to “discriminate”, at its most basic, means “to recognize a distinction, to differentiate.”

Remember the Sesame Street song “one of these things is not like the other”?

When humans began living in groups...

...thousands of years ago, they learned to be suspicious of “others”: outsiders, other groups of humans, people who didn’t look like them, etc. That was a survival mechanism.



We still use it today,
mostly without
thinking...

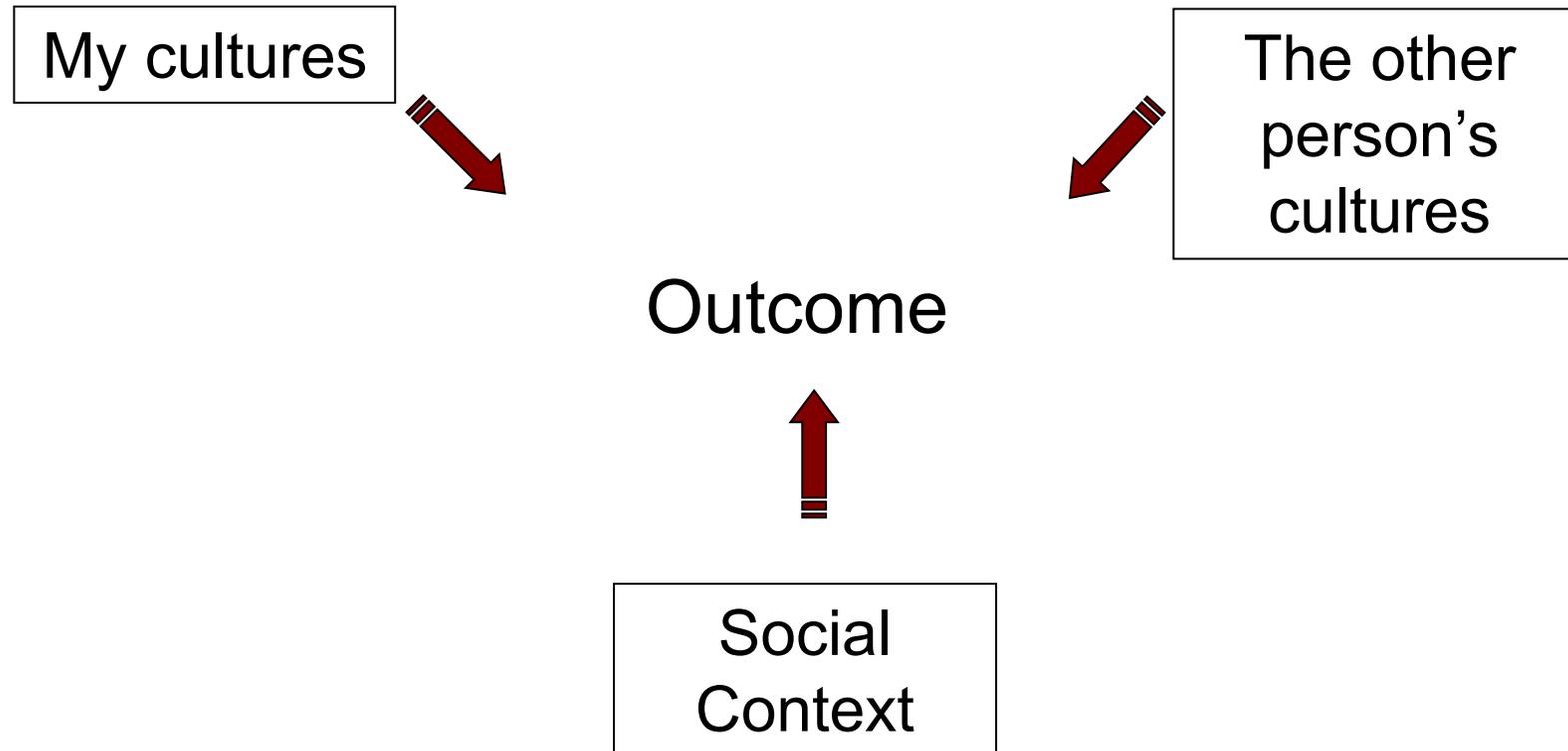


The more different the “other” is...

...the more our brains “discriminate”

But we must be vigilant that our innate tendency to mistrust what is different doesn't lead to the other definition of discrimination, “to make an unjust or prejudicial distinction in the treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, sex, age, or disability.”

When worlds collide



What are *MY* "cultures"?

WHO AM I?



CATHOLIC



MALE



HETEROSEXUAL



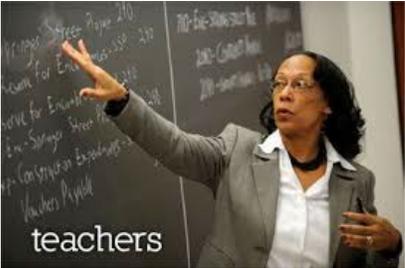
MARRIED



FATHER/HUSBAND



PSYCHOLOGIST



TEACHER



SCIENTIST



SES



Puerto Rico & USA

Small Group Activity

1. What are *YOUR* cultures?
2. Which ones define you the *MOST*.
3. What values, beliefs, and practices come from the cultures that define you the most?
4. What can happen when you interact with someone with different values, beliefs, and practices than you, because they belong to other cultures?

RESUME LARGE GROUP CONVERSATION

- REPORT FROM A FEW GROUPS
- What did you learn that was new?
- What surprised you the most?
- What do you take from this activity that could be useful in your work?

Conclusions from Part I

- ❑ To be patient in affliction is hard
- ❑ Sharing the burden can help us all: let us take care of each other
- ❑ Recognize our natural tendency to mistrust
- ❑ Take a leap of faith and **CHOOSE** to see God in the “other”, no matter how different from us

PART II

Faithful in Prayer



Faithfulness
requires integrity,
and God tests
your integrity in
the little things.

Faithful

1. Steadfast in affection or allegiance, loyal, a faithful friend.
- 2 . Firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty, conscientious, a faithful employee.
3. Given with strong assurance, binding a faithful promise.
4. True to the facts, to a standard, or to an original, a faithful copy.

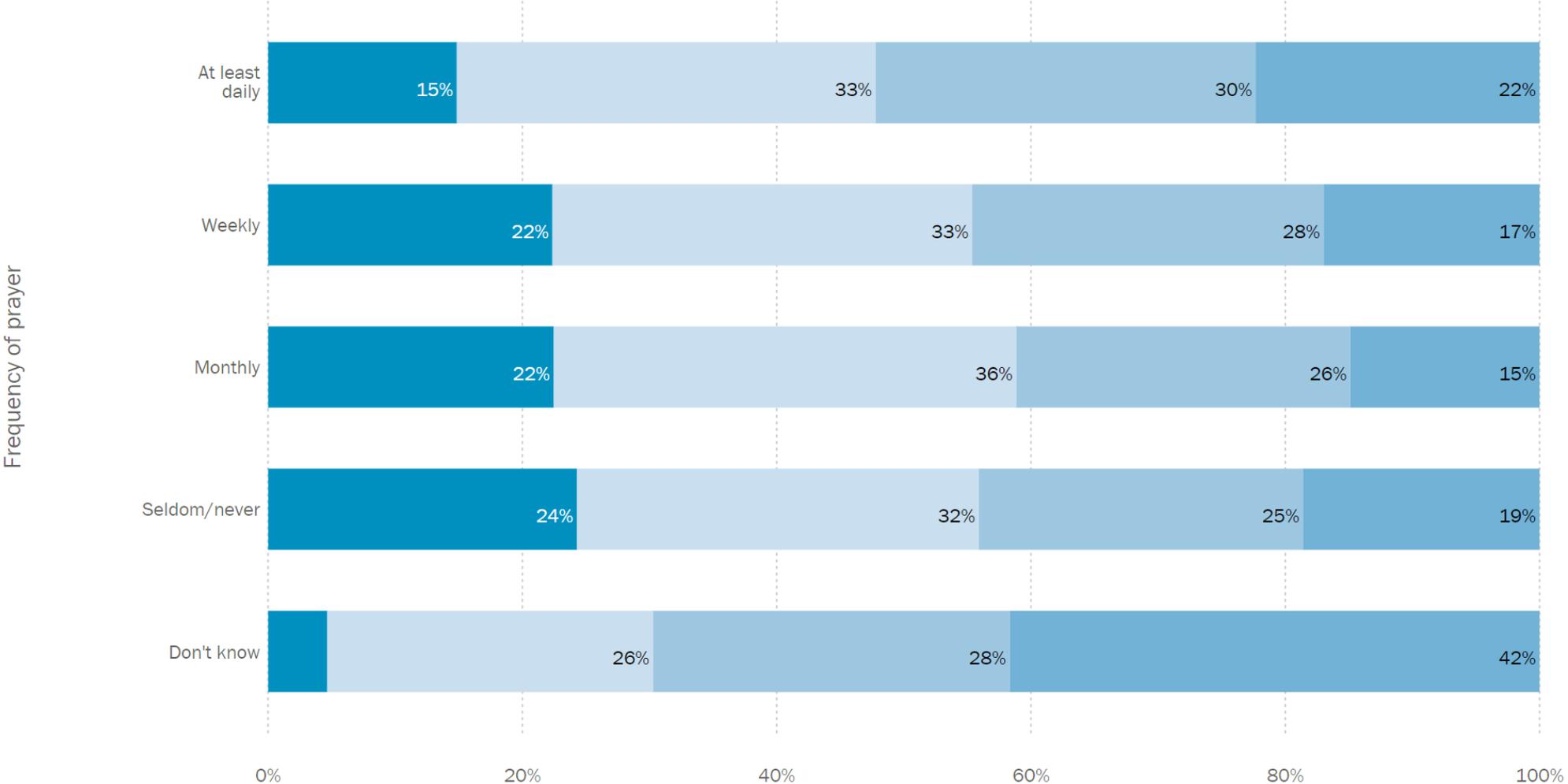
Prayer can be...

- Overwhelming—what to pray for?
- An easy response to a difficult situation: “you are in my thoughts and prayers”
- A bit of a nuisance—who has the time?

Age distribution among Christians by frequency of prayer

% of Christians who are ages...

- 18-29
- 30-49
- 50-64
- 65+



Prayer can be...

- Overwhelming—what to pray for?
- An easy response to a difficult situation: “you are in my thoughts and prayers”
- A bit of a nuisance—who has the time?
- Difficult—where do I begin?
- Scary—what will God tell me?

Being faithful in prayer requires...

- ❑ Intentionality—setting aside a defined time and place to pray. *What are some ideal places and times?*
- ❑ Humility—we must acknowledge that we are not the Good Samaritan, but the beaten man on the side of the road. We must strive to forgive ourselves before we ask for God’s forgiveness.
- ❑ Patience—if it was easy, everyone would do it all the time.

From Sarah Young, *Be faithful in prayer*

Softly I announce My Presence.

Shimmering hues of radiance tap gently at your consciousness, seeking entrance. Though I have all Power in Heaven and on earth, I am infinitely tender with you. The weaker you are, the more gently I approach you. Let your weakness be a door to My Presence. Whenever you feel inadequate, remember that I am your *ever-present Help*.

Hope in Me, and you will be protected from depression and self-pity. Hope is like a golden cord connecting you to heaven. The more you cling to this cord, the more I bear the weight of your burdens; thus, you are lightened. Heaviness is not of My kingdom. Cling to hope, and My rays of Light will reach you through the darkness.

I am able to do far beyond all that you ask or imagine.

Come to Me with positive expectations, knowing that there is no limit to what I can accomplish. Ask My Spirit to control your mind so that you can think great thoughts of Me. Do not be discouraged by the fact that many of your prayers are yet unanswered. Time is a trainer, teaching you to wait upon Me, to trust Me in the dark. The more extreme your circumstances, the more likely you are to see *My Power and Glory* at work in the situation. Instead of letting difficulties draw you into worrying, try to view them as setting the scene for My glorious intervention.

<https://www.faithgateway.com/be-faithful-in-prayer/#.YpidSXbMLYw>

PART III

Joyful in hope



Joy

1. A feeling of great pleasure and happiness; "tears of joy".
2. To experience great pleasure or delight.
3. The emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires.
4. The expression or exhibition of such emotion.
5. A state of happiness or felicity.
6. A source or cause of delight.

Being *joyful in hope*...

- ❑ No matter how much is going on around us—remember our discussion about affliction?—we keep looking forward.
- ❑ We are never without hope.
- ❑ We know that “this too shall pass” and that brighter days are up ahead because our God is a good God, and his love for us is everlasting and unfailing.
- ❑ Psalm 42:11—“Why are you cast down, O my soul,. and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.”

Being *joyful in hope*...

- ❑ Choosing faith in every situation, trusting God because we're confident that our hope in him is real: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1).
- ❑ Always hoping for the best, confident in faith that God will do what's best for us as we trust him.
- ❑ No matter what we encounter in life, we can experience joy in hope, because joy is based on our relationship with the God, who offers us hope.

Being *joyful in hope...*

- ❑ Joy is part of our birthright as God's children: those who have taken the light burden and easy yoke of Christ (Mat 11:30) will be able to feel joyful even in the most difficult of trials (Connectusfund.org).
- ❑ “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)
- ❑ If God calls us to be joyful in hope, who are we to say no?



Being joyful in hope...



...patient in affliction,

and faithful in prayer...



...will make us better Christians...