arise

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

Isaiah 60:1

Message Notes

Surrender.... Receive.... A_____!

ARISE is a an intentional call to action for Point of Grace to be transformed as individuals and as a church body, to literally "become light" and "shine" for God's glory in key areas of personal and church life. Part One of ARISE will call Point of Grace to surrender to God's transforming work in the area of financial giving.

The First Movement of ARISE is _____!

There is more to transformation than Surrender. The Second Movement is R_____!

The Third solidifies and catalyzes transformation! It is A_____! (O_____!, D_____!)

Romans 12 *[1]Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. [2]Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Galatians 2 *[20]I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

John 15 *[5]"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ... [9]"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. [10]If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.[11]I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

John 14 *[23]Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. [24]He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. ... [26]But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. [27]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.*

I SURRENDER me and my a_____ to God!

I RECEIVE Him and His agenda for me!

Then I ACT accordingly in s_____ o_____!

(These are two very good words!)

Transformation happens as:

Surrender becomes my "normal" in life,
Receiving becomes my "mode" of life and
Obedience becomes my "way" of life!

Giving is Sacrificially, Obedient ACTION!

- ***FIRST FRUITS - Off the top!***

Proverbs 3 *[9] Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops;*

- ***GOD OWNS IT ALL—I'm the manager!***

Malachi 3 *[8] "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How ?' "In tithes and offerings.[10] Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.*

- ***GOD ABUNDANTLY PROVIDES!***
- ***PROPORTIONATE GIVING!***

2 Corinthians 8 *[12]For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.*

A Personal and Small Group Experience

Contentment

Contentment! What a wonderful and rare trait! Most people agree that contentment is essential for happiness but somehow find that it eludes them. While the atmosphere of our world erodes faith, dissipates hope and corrupts love, it is hard to put our finger on what is wrong. There are feelings that things simply aren't right. We think making more money will bring happiness, but no matter how much we have, most of us still want more. We think that achieving some goal or getting recognition will make us content, but there's always a higher hill to climb and a higher goal to achieve. We think that having fun will bring peace to our lives, but no amount of fun can fill the hole in our hearts. There is nothing wrong with possessions, achievements, fame, and fun—if we see them as gifts from God. These things may give us some joy for a short time, but they aren't the source of genuine peace and contentment.

Everyone traveling the road of faith requires assistance from time to time. When the way is unclear, we need encouragement and direction from one another. The root cause of discontentment comes from the fact that we hang suspended between two worlds. We are much like a trapeze artist who needs to let go of the bar that lie is Holding onto in order to fly through the air to someone waiting and ready to catch him and supply a sure support. Spiritually, we want to leave behind our fear and doubt to fly through the midair known as faith to be caught by grace and there find true contentment.

THE TRUE MEANING OF CONTENTMENT

Contentment is not a nonchalant attitude of indifference that is lacking in concern for one's own growth. Contentment is described in the dictionary as feeling or manifesting satisfaction with one's possessions, status, or situation. The Apostle Paul modeled contentment in Acts 20:33-35 as he spoke to Elders from Ephesus while at the small retreat of Mullites. (Please read Acts 20:33-35). Paul says in verse 33, "*I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.*" Before we proceed further, let's ask, can we say that, too? If so, we are rare persons.

"*I do not covet anyone else's income and I do not covet anyone else's belongings. I do not envy.*" In verse 34, Paul displays his hands to Luke to underscore his point. Then he shares from the words of Jesus how to attain contentment: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" Paul would later say, "*God loves a cheerful giver.*" We can't be cheerful and content until we see that all we have has been given to us by God.

Q. Name some things or people that we allow to steal our contentment.
(E.g., stress, boss, kids, spouse, car problems, in-laws, jealousy, envy, traffic, hurt feelings, etc.)

In his letters, Paul explained that he could be content no matter what his circumstances might be—Read Philippians 4:11-13. After reading, discuss Paul's life. Many circumstances were painful and not pleasant. God does not force us to be content; we must choose it! Contentment is NOT based on our circumstances according to these verses. Godly contentment is finding hope and pleasure in my relationship with Christ — regardless of my circumstances. The secret to contentment is found in verse 13 - knowing that Christ Jesus will strengthen me to accomplish whatever I encounter. It is found in depending on His strength and not my own strength.

Q. Share a time in your life when you experienced (or chose) contentment in spite of the circumstances you were facing.

SOME BENEFITS OF CONTENTMENT

- It provides immediate enjoyment where we are and in what we have, regardless of our circumstances.
- It provides freedom to recognize someone else's achievements and applaud them instead of being jealous.
- It cultivates a thankful spirit.

FOUR WORDS THAT ENCOURAGE CONTENTMENT:

GOD OWNS IT ALL.

Look up the following passages: *Job 41:11, Psalms 24:1, I Corinthians 6:19,* I Timothy 6:7, *Matthew 6:19-21*

These passages all have one message in common— All that we have is His. We are born into this world with empty hands and we will leave this world with empty hands and no need for pockets or purses. As we recognize that God owns it all, we begin to focus on eternal things— not the earthly, temporal things. John Wesley said this, "When the processor of heaven and earth brought you into being and placed you in this world he placed you here, not as an owner, but as a steward."

Q. What are some things God has entrusted specifically to you while on this earth?
(E.g., Money, material possessions, spouse, kids, career, various ministries, etc.)

In this life, God allows certain things to be placed in our possession. None of these are under our ownership. In pleasing Him, we live our lives with open hands, holding all that He has entrusted to us loosely. We must never forget that, at any time, He may choose to remove them from us. It is His sovereign right. Are we living our lives open handed? Do we find ourselves gripping tightly the things of our world?

CONTENTMENT LEADS TO GENEROSITY

Look up 2 Corinthians 8:7-15 and read together in your small group. First, notice that verse 7 tells us that this Corinthian church was abounding in everything. "In faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all allegiance and in your love for us." This Corinthian church was a wonderful place of worship, abounding in good things. Second, verse 8 urges us to listen to the testimony of others. The "others" in this verse refers to the churches in Macedonia who gave out of deep poverty. Third, verse 9 patterns the example of Christ. The next time we find ourselves reluctant to give we should remember to count our blessings, listen to other's testimonies and look to the example of Christ.

Q. On a scale of 0 to 10, how would you rate our church in the following areas — faith, speech (preaching), knowledge (Bible study) and allegiance (unity) and love?

Q. Can you recall a testimony you have heard or read that prompted you to give?

By nature we are keepers, not releasers. We enjoy hanging on, rather than turning loose. Because of our inadequacies it is not surprising that Paul would relate to us four hindrances to giving.

FOUR COMMON HINDRANCES TO GIVING

1. Procrastination (vs. 10-11)
This means that we put something off intentionally. In verse 11, Paul begins by saying "But now…"

Q. What excuses do we make to procrastinate in our giving?
(Don't have enough time, strength; others are more capable; I'll do it later; As soon as... then I'll give.)

2. Lack of Enthusiasm (vs. 10-11)
The Corinthian Church allowed their readiness to decline. They were no longer excited about giving.

Q. What are some reasons we lose our enthusiasm to give?

Q. How can we develop a spirit of enthusiasm about giving?

3. Overreaction (vs. 12)
This verse deals with the concept of ability. Some fail to give because they think too little of their ability to give. The over-reactor says, "If I can't do what someone else can do, I will do nothing at all."

Q. Do you agree or disagree with this statement (and why): "We all have something to give to God."

Those who overreact to the responsibility of giving need to review Mark 12:41-44. *"Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling His disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on."*

Q. In what ways is it easier to say we have too little to give?

4. Finding Exceptions (vs. 13-15)

The exception hindrance says, "I am not responsible since others have it easier than I do financially." If we hide behind the exception syndrome, we forfeit our joy and could become bitter.

Q. From these verses, do you think giving should be planned or spontaneous? Why?

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO PROCESS

- Do we really believe God owns it all?
- Are we sensing God's presence in our money matters?
- Are we currently refusing to hide behind any excuse?
- Can we honestly say we are convinced that this is a ministry of integrity?
- Will we diligently begin to dethrone money in our lives?

BECOMING CONTENT

- True contentment is based on our dependence on Christ, not our circumstances.
- When we find contentment in loving God, we give of ourselves and our resources to God and to others.
- A content person is satisfied from the inside out.

PRAYER

In group prayer you can offer a tremendous amount of support for one another with regards to contentment. Pray for one another according to what has been shared tonight. Make sure everyone has shared at least one challenge with regards to contentment and one deep desire on this subject. Prayer for each other in such a way that everyone is prayed for according to their needs by someone else out loud!

Scripture & Meditation Guide for March 8-13

Helpful Hints:

1) Find a quiet place along with 15-20 minutes!
2) Focus on God for a few moments asking His Spirit to speak to your heart!
3) Listen to Him by reading a section of scripture then rereading it several times, dwelling on "words and phrases" which grab your heart's attention.
4) Ask God, "What do You want me to hear?" "Why this word at this time?" "How are You inviting me to respond?"
5) Pray everything that is on your heart and mind as you are ready! *Worship Him, Bless Him, Thank Him, Ask Him, Trust Him*

These verses will remind you in some way to SURRENDER—RECEIVE and ACT!

Monday:	**Proverbs 3:1-10**
Tuesday:	**John 15:1-11**
Wednesday:	**John 14: 15-21**
Thursday:	**Psalm 51**
Friday:	**Romans 12:9-12**
Saturday:	**2 Corinthians 8:1-15**