

THOUGHTS

BY DOUGLAS W. SCHROEDER
SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY

LOVE AND ZEAL A GOOD MIX IN 2026

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How do we maintain our balance spiritually as Christians in this crazy world? The theme for Our Shepherd Lutheran is "Love and Zeal: A Good Mix in 2026!" I will be focusing on the necessity of both love and zeal, or fervency, in serving God. The theme passage is from Romans 12:11, "Never be lacking in zeal, but maintain your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord."

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Even new Christians are aware that God's love is needed both to redeem us and empower us to live for Christ. One of the most famous passages on the topic of love contains many absolutes, "It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:7-8a). It's a big challenge to be filled with God's love such that we always operate empowered by it! We tend to be leaky vessels in need of refilling with His love by the Holy Spirit. That is where maintaining our spiritual balance comes into play.

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Our bodies have three systems that coordinate to maintain balance. The Vestibular System pertains to the parts of the inner ear that allow us to sense rotational, linear, and head-position movements. The visual system provides clues about our environment, which helps the brain understand its position in space. The Proprioceptive System involves sensory receptors in muscles and joints, which provides feedback about body position and movement. These systems help us to maintain balance.

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I had a conversation this morning with a man in our congregation who wishes to become more involved in the church's ministry. We explored his interests and found that he would enjoy working with social media to benefit the church and the Kingdom of Christ. We discussed two aspects of involvement, one to keep him grounded and growing by attending the men's midweek Bible class regularly, and the other to introduce him to our current leader of the church's Internet ministry.

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As we discussed, his becoming more involved in using his spiritual gifts in Christian ministry, we felt it would be good for him to ground himself spiritually through consistent Bible class attendance. He had been playing basketball three times each week, and the early 5 am start ran into the 6 am Wednesday men's Bible class time. Lately, he had noticed his midlife body was showing signs of strain, with achy knees and a new muscle strain in his arm. It seemed good and balanced to cut back one day from basketball and replace it with Bible sports and fellowship time! I suspect that if he does so, he will find a pleasing balance both physically and spiritually!

I understand the zeal for playing sports, as I played basketball, volleyball, and racquetball for many years. Eventually, I developed cysts on my ankle and foot, and at the advice of an orthopedic surgeon, walked away from it all to protect my long-term viability of my foot and ankle. I needed to find balance, and when I did, I had less pain. When we are out of balance, our lives will show painful, strained, or addictive areas which hurt us, and perhaps others too. As we have been made in the image of God, we show zeal, or passion, for things that interest us. Taken too far, it can become addiction, or if allowed to skew into sin, it can become addictive sin, which most of the time wreaks havoc on the believer's life.

2026

The Word
Today
Box 77
Greendale, WI
53129



*The Bible is God's Word...Jesus is God's "Word" made flesh...
His death and resurrection, the message needed Today.*

We maintain fervor for the things we feel are important. So, I ask you, are you maintaining your spiritual fervor as a Christian? It's all about commitment. The root word of the term "disciple" is discipline, practice. Jesus calls us to His Church, where believers doggedly habituate themselves to worship, prayer, the study of the Word, and acts of loving service. January is upon us; it's a good time to assess how we will maintain God's love and our spiritual zeal in 2026!

January

INFLUENZA CAN BE DEADLY

Influenza is the disease of addiction to pandering to the world, often by self-harm or dangerous stunts. Its egotism run amok, an attempt to make yourself someone important, often by defying God's will.

I am not amused by the name she chose as an influencer, Mary Magdalene. Is that supposed to be funny, cute? Is it supposed to be dramatic or provocative? As if Mary Magdalene had a cool story to tell about her life? The woman was tormented by evil spirits, a hellish existence that was only addressed by Jesus, the Son of God, driving out the demons and restoring her to normalcy, after which she became a disciple. The best thing about Mary Magdalene was that she encountered Jesus.

The influencer "Mary Magdalene", whose real name was Denise Ivonne Jarvis Gongora - not nearly so provocative, especially considering what the woman did to herself - seems to have flung herself, or fallen, off a 9th-story balcony in Thailand, killing her at age 33.

It's hard to look at images of Denise Gongora because she turned herself into a freak with body modification and tattoos. She appears ghastly, and I do not use that term lightly. A person who has inflicted damage on herself is the "Alien", the man who tried to turn himself into a facsimile of a reptile. The only thing more painful to contemplate than Gongora's death is her mental state. The woman had 400,000 followers on social media accounts, but it did not add one ounce of stability to her life.

I fear that Denise is in Hell, the victim of the lies of the Tempter and a wicked world. Lies such as a person is free to damage, deform, and deface the body given to them by the Creator. Lies such as having no purpose due to being an evolved life form, up from the slime. Lies such as it being rewarding and sustaining to parade oneself for the masses and feed off their responses.

It is painful to look at what the woman did to her face. The rearrangement of her eyebrows and playing games with fat injection and removal, and worst, the almost living necrotic character of the black lines like an infection spreading across her face and scalp, it all seems demonically inspired. Only Satanic influence could cause a person to do that to themselves, then purportedly throw their life away. No, this woman was nothing like Mary Magdalene. God willing, people who search the biblical woman's name will discover one who can redeem from the Devil and self-destructive tendencies!

[Influencer Mary Magdalene, known for dramatic cosmetic surgeries, dies at 33 after falling from high-rise apartment](#)

*Blessings,
Douglas W. Schroeder*

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