

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday June 3, 2018 "I Love My Church-Growing".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message on Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still go thru it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Sunday's message.

This past Sunday Tami talked about the importance of growth in our "***I Love My Church***" series. In order to do community well, and for the church to be what Jesus established the church to be, there has to be this intentional, (we're going to wear this word out), effort and practice of placing specific things in our regular life that promote growth. And not just head knowledge or gaining information. Growth, a "*well-formed maturity*", simply has to be seen in our ordinary, everyday, walking around life. And Tami hit on two major practices that can help us grow in our faith, AND **how we live it out. Regular Bible study**, and **actively participating in a smaller group** of people who are all committed to personal spiritual growth.

The odd thing is we all already know this is true. Our commitment to these practices, or lack thereof, is not because we don't already know about these...right? "*WHUUUUT?!?!? Eating nothing but cheeseburger and fries ISN'T good for me?!?!?*" Our lack of regularly doing these things is NOT an information issue. We already know these are life-giving enriching habits. Bottom line is the regular practice of these is an....OBEDIENCE issue. We so hate that word, but we know it's true.

So...as always, some questions. And answering them honestly will go a long way.

In general, why are these so difficult to maintain as habits?

Specifically, why do YOU have a difficult time maintaining these habits?

The purpose of this devotional is not to make you feel guilty for not doing these things, not to convince you that it's good to practice them, (you already know that), but to help you carve out sacred space to put these things into practice.

Practicing healthy spiritual habits is something you have to make a priority and just make space to do. It's just like eating healthy, exercising regularly, calling your mom, (you know you need to do that too). Just take that first, next, step towards doing it.

And for most of us, the first step is growing the 'want to' to 'want to'. You know you need to, but most of the time you simply don't really want to.

One of the scriptures Tami used was Jeremiah 17:8 which taught how trees flourish when they are planted near a source of water. And our water is regular reading of scripture and gathering together. .

Understanding the importance of these two things we realize that most of the time we don't do them is because this is a 'schedule' issue, so let's look at your day and see what it's filled with.

What does an average day look like for you? What about an average week?

Just do a quick, but detailed, tracking of what you do in a day and in a week.

There is a tendency for trivial things to become more important than they actually are. We allow drift, creep, into our schedule and we do those things more out of habit or routine than necessity or benefit. So...some difficult questions.

What in your schedule could you do without...or at least less of?

What have you allowed to creep into your regular routine that doesn't have to be there?

If you were to actually carve out a tiny space, 5-15 minutes a day, where could you do that?

Mornings, before bed, lunchtime...where?

And where in your week could you set aside a couple of hours to meet regularly with a group of people who are all actively working towards what we have described as "*well-formed maturity*"?

What could you specifically do to carve out this space to gather a group of people you know, or to join an already existing group to help in this area of your life?

We're going to shoot straight here. Whether this happens or not. Whether you create a regular practice of reading scripture, and joining together with a group of like searching people, is on you. We can't push you, guilt you, pressure you into developing this practice. You have to want to do this. However, we are so aware and sensitive to how difficult this is to start. Our lives are busy, we have so much going on, and when we're not busy we're exhausted. The last thing we want to do is to add one more thing to our schedule, and we don't want to as a church to make you feel guilty for not practicing these things.

Regular reading of scripture and participating in a small group will only happen when you see the value you in it, grow the desire to want to, and then actually practice enough self-discipline to make it happen. Otherwise it won't.

So, as a person who still struggles to read scripture at least 5 days a week, and who participates in TWO small groups, I realize that in order for me to do this, I had to value personal spiritual growth enough to sacrifice some other things to make it happen...and let me tell you...IT'S MORE THAN WORTH IT! I like who i am becoming because of the time I spend doing this.

So...don't be discouraged, don't beat yourself up if regular Bible reading and participating in a small group is not part of your daily routine. God is not giving out grades. This is for YOUR benefit, and if you can do this you will LOVE the 'you' you will become!!