

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday April 26, 2020 "Forward: Staying committed to the better life."

I Intro.

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

II Corona Update.

A side note before we get started. We know there is a lot of...uummm let's say conversation, out there about what it looks like to work our way back to normal. And along with those conversations, there are a lot of strong opinions, (because we're all epidemiologists now aren't we), about how we should start everything back up again. We're not going to venture into those waters, but we do want to let you know we are having specific and detailed conversations about what going back to normal would take. And the timeline for all of that. There will be a day when we do gather together again, and we want to do it at the right time, and in the most responsible and healthy way possible. We will keep you posted as things change for us. Until then...it's streaming messages for the next several weeks.

III Sunday.

Ok...Sunday we had Kristen...Dr Hill, back to continue the conversation about what it looks like to live this Forward, Deeper life of living a life with meaning and purpose. It was so great to have a different voice Sunday morning, and to get some great insight and perspective. Not only for life, but to help us through this ordeal. Let's start with the scripture she used and then we'll dig down after that. So, read **Matthew 22:34-40**, and then we'll go into more detail.

This is a super familiar passage to most, so how do you usually interpret this passage?

Does it say anything new to you during this COVID pandemic?

How does it speak into other areas of your faith?

Kristen used this passage as a reminder, especially during this time, about the importance of perspective, and especially what she labeled flexibility during these times. We can get bogged down in the details, and so easily lose sight of what's really important. So let's go there.

Where in the practice of your faith can you get lost in unimportant details?

Why does this happen?

How can we be aware of when this happens, or what are some warning signs for you when you start to slip into getting lost in the 'nitty-gritty' and missing the bigger picture?

Kristen went on to say, it is so important that we work to stay flexible and focused on these two important truths from Jesus, "*Love God, love others*". Because we are created and built to serve

others. And it's in this keeping a more Christ-like love centered perspective, that will help us to try not to treat this current situation like normal, and grow a flexibility within us to be and do what we can to help others during this time. We've talked about handling this situation differently than normal life, but we may have not given it the amount of intentional effort that it requires or that we need to.

Flexibility is defined in several different ways. First, as the ability to bend, adjust, adapt, 'be' in a different world, without breaking.

Let's define that. What does this understanding of flexibility mean for you?

What does that mean in light of our current situation?

Flexibility is also defined as the ability AND willingness to change or compromise. Two values our world doesn't seem to be drawn towards. We see compromise as weakness, (we let extreme politicians make this claim), and we see changing as flip-flopping. Even if we learn new and important information, we tend to not change our understanding or perspective because of that new info.

So, how do you see the ideas of flexibility being able to change or compromise?

What gets in the way of us being able to do that well?

What can we 'know', 'understand', and 'practice' to help us change and make compromises in a healthy way?

Flexibility was also couched in the terms of courage and sacrifice. And in order to be the 'best us' we can be during this time, we have to figure out and define what flexibility is in the terms of "*loving God and loving others*", but also how we live that out in courageous ways.

So, let's do a deep dive into these understandings.

How can being flexible in an understanding of "*loving God, and loving others*" be seen as courage?

How can being flexible in an understanding of "*loving God, and loving others*" be seen as sacrifice?

What can and does get in the way of doing this well?

What can we 'know', 'understand', and 'practice' to do each of these better?

IV Challenge.

So, bottom line. We're going to be in this place for awhile. We want to do it with all of the life-giving, healthiest, best way we can. And a huge part of that is centering who we are, and the energy of what motivates us, on the words of Jesus. Everything we say and do is run through the filter of; "*does this reflect a love for God, and a love for others?*" And that focus, understanding of our motivation and purpose, will help us be the better us through this time. Our hope and prayer for each of us during this time, is to focus on this command from Jesus, and build this new life to serve those around us. This is our calling! Live into it!!