

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

August 28, 2022 "The Unique You: Now what?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing, and you can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. School has started back and we'll be cranking up our fall schedule. Our children's area is expanding, and we've moved check-in into the lobby. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can see all that through our newly upgraded app, and social media sites. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. If you're joining us online, we appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Recap.

This is the final Sunday in our series in which we're learning about our uniqueness, and how God has intentionally designed this world to express all of the infiniteness of who he is. We may feel isolated or even 'less than' when we fall into the trap of comparing ourselves to the people around us. But if we can find the purpose in our divine uniqueness, seek God and his anointing of who we are, then there is this place and purpose we can fulfill that will make our lives meaningful. But it all begins with accepting ourselves and all of who we are. And that is a journey of acceptance and discovery. But...sometimes our uniqueness can feel and maybe even be so unique that we can't seem to find a place to belong. We may make others feel uncomfortable or hesitant to be close to us. We may have personality quirks, or even a lifestyle that just doesn't sit well with other people. And even if we come to some understanding and acceptance of who we are, it feels like so many others are just unable to do the same. And so we can feel alone. The church has been one of the worst places in not accepting others for who they are, and for this I apologize. I can't speak for every church. But I can acknowledge and say out loud the church has been front and center in its treatment of people who are different. And that we need to be front and center in doing the things that would address this very real and I'll just call it evil presence within the church.

Because often our uniqueness will make it more difficult to find a community to do life with, we all have a tendency to try to just 'fit in'. Basically the understanding of 'fitting in' is we have to change who we are in order to find a group to accept us. We will adopt the beliefs, mannerisms, dress, language, and more, sacrificing our own divine uniqueness so we can have a group to be a part of. Fitting in is always a compromise of who we really are and we usually discover we don't really belong. Our belonging is conditional and dependent on our ability to keep up with the ever changing definition of what it means to belong. This was a long recap, but we wanted to make sure we understood what it really means to live in our uniqueness.

III Sunday.

Sunday we talked about how to live life as the real you. Not other people's expectations. Not trying to live up to some idea of religions someone is forcing on you. But the divine you. The way you were created. The REAL you. And in discovering who you are, how God made you, the life that's possible

for you. Not always an easy trouble free life, but one that can bring meaning and purpose. And has an impact on the lives of those around you. So, speaking of which...let's think about impact.

Name one or two people who had a huge impact on you when you were younger. What difference did they make in your life?

Do you have anyone in your life now that you consider a source of wisdom and insight?

Do you have anyone in your life you feel like you have an opportunity to guide?

We used two passages Sunday, and we need to include both of them for this devotional. We'll read each one, ask a few questions, and then close with some final points. Read **1 Peter 4:10-11**.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

How do you understand the purpose of how we are wired?

Where have you felt the empowering of any giftedness you have?

This passage just reiterates a truth we've been stating over and over again. And that is our uniqueness. Our gifts, abilities, talents, passions, personality are to do great things, and help others. That is where we will find maximum joy and purpose.

The problem is sustaining this desire and practice of staying in our giftedness and using it for good. We get tired, distracted, discouraged at times, and more. And there is a second truth we found in scripture that helps us AFTER we discover our uniqueness, and put it into use. Read **John 15:5-11** and we really dig into this one.

1. God's desire through Jesus is you would experience a full life of joy. Joy found in doing the wiser and better thing. But to remain in your giftedness you **have to want to choose joy.** This is how that works...chasing joy. **"Don't trade what you want most for what you want in the moment."** That is at the root of joy and living fully into our uniqueness. Ever find yourself doing the wiser thing and catching yourself off guard? Get that rush of adrenaline and good feeling. That's joy.

2. Producing fruit is our purpose. You WILL produce fruit. You WILL leave a legacy. People will tell stories about you after you're gone. You get to decide what legacy that will be. This is what it means to be a disciple. To stay in your giftedness, your purpose has to be to produce fruit. What is producing fruit? **"Fruit is the increase of something that is good"** So, fruit can be other followers of Jesus, and things like the fruit of the spirit.

III Challenge.

3. The secret...is to remain...abide. You want to live in your unique giftedness, you have to stay close to God. This is for our benefit. This is something we know...it's an understood truth. The more we're around something the closer we become with it. The vine is life, it's everything you need, and apart from it is...not life. And no fruit. Abiding brings you all you need. Abiding grows relationships. Jesus is saying abiding, remaining, will create joy. Which is the point of our uniqueness, our belonging, our learning who we are, how we're made, then doing great things with it. It's about producing fruit.

What are some practices, routines, habits you can put into place that will both help you discover who you are, grow you closer to God, and produce fruit...an increase of good things?