

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday Feb 14, 2021. "Stealing away: what does a life of going deeper look like?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this 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.

We're well into 2021 and thankfully, we're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Sunday.

We finished a challenging three week series addressing inequality and injustice and turned towards a look at personal spiritual growth. A huge thanks to our two guest preachers Kristen and Nelson. They gave us a brilliant and diverse look at the effects of injustice, and specific ways we can actively be a part of God's work of helping '*give people their rights*'. It was hard work but hopefully well worth it. Now we'll take a three week look into what life looks like growing deeper spiritually, and what it takes to do that well. I am convinced we all want to grow spiritually, and have a closer walk with God. But we often aren't sure what it looks like, and we drift from an original commitment to spiritual growth.

So, How have you experienced your personal spiritual growth in the past?

What has helped you grow spiritually, and what have been hurdles that have slowed or inhibited your spiritual growth?

Our scripture Sunday was 1 Corinthians 2. A short chapter, in which Paul hit some of the specific elements that were for him a part of his journey towards "*the mind of Christ*". And how we can apply those in our daily life. In addition, we'll touch on that phrase, "*mind of Christ*" at the end of this devotional. So, read **1 Corinthians 2**, and we'll dive deeper into it.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What did you notice Paul say about what spiritual growth looks like and requires?

There were four things Paul highlighted in his letter as essential parts of our spiritual growth.

1. Admit I'm not where I need to be.

This is the classic first step admitting there is always potential growth in our relationship with God, and how we live that out. It's not judgment or condemnation, but just a confession we all can make.

Why is it difficult for us to admit we still have a lot of growing to do, and what does it take to get to that place?

2. Realize there are more truths than my currently held ones.

In admitting; *"I'm not where I need to be"*, also hoping, trusting there is a greater power out there that can help and guide us to where we want to be. This step can be particularly tough, because admitting there are more truths out there requires us to realize some of what we believe may not be true. AND it challenges us to cultivate a sense of curiosity to want to always learn and grow more in our faith. Our faith is not about having or holding onto the right set of beliefs. But having a faith that focuses on a God, that if we continually walk with him, will constantly teach and show us new truths.

What keeps us from searching for new truths and new understandings. What would help us overcome those obstacles?

3. I cannot 'grit' myself to real spiritual growth.

There is a not so secret 'secret' about this journey. God has given us this gift, guide, companion, Jesus called 'the comforter', who will travel with us towards this life we want. So, spiritual growth is not about how hard we work, how much we can grind it out, but rather how we can continually surrender to the process of having a 'well-formed' maturity being worked within us. It does require effort, but you will not be able to do this by your own strength.

Do you tend to be a 'grit it out', (head down just plowing forward), or always seeking the easier path type of person?

What would it look like in your life to surrender to a greater power to grow?

4. My goal is a spiritual growth I can define AND explain.

To travel this journey, we need to be able to know what direction we're going. This does not mean we have to be able to understand everything about our faith, but to know enough to power our motivation. This is where we land on the phrase Paul used of *"having the mind of Christ"*. Not that we know all the in's and out's of exactly what *"the mind of Christ"* specifically means, but we know it's adopting a lifestyle that grows within us a desire to move towards Christlikeness.

Simple question; what does the "mind of Christ" mean, and look like in your daily life?

III Challenge.

The opening two questions of this devotion were to prompt you to do an honest look at your current spiritual life, and answer what you wanted out of your relationship with God. We fully understand not everyone is at the same place on their journey of spiritual growth. As with other types of growth, there are seasons of intense progress, and some seasons that just feel like... well this winter. Too long and not much movement at all. All through the Old Testament, Hebrew scriptures, there are parallels drawn between a relationship with God, and cycles of growth and rest. And as natural as both of those are, there must be an intentionality in how we do both. Growth must be directed and purposeful and rest must be planned and meaningful. That's what leads to healthy life-giving spiritual growth.

So, if you were to use a 'season' to describe your current spiritual life what would it be.

Winter. Spring. Summer. Or fall.

And what season would you need to be in and what would it take to get there?