

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday Oct. 25, 2020. "Now What? What have I learned to create my future?"

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 still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us in person. 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 Recap.

At the beginning of October we began the series; "**Now what?**", as a conversation about this pandemic we find ourselves in. We didn't plan for this, see it coming, and many of us are still trying to figure out how to navigate this bizarre new world. The question; "**now what?**" is us admitting we've come to the end of ourselves. We're ready to let go of any assumptions that have been blown apart by this and accept our new reality. And we don't want to just survive. We want to make the most out of our lives as possible, and have some control over what our future will look like. So, far we've talked about actively reflecting back, practicing gratitude, and choosing wisely who we do life with. All of these are available online.

III Sunday.

Sunday we finished our "**now what?**" series with the question; "*How can we create our own future?*" Not only does it involve knowing specific things, but in order to create the future we want, in the middle of however long this pandemic lasts, we have to be willing to put in the work and do the things. So, we started with two questions asking how you felt about the direction your life was going.

Is the way you are living your life working for you?

Is the way you're living moving you towards the 'you' you want to be, and the life you want?

In a simple understanding about having some ability to create a specific future for ourselves, we have to understand the 'principle of the paths'. It's not our intent, what we hope happens, that creates this future for us. Meaning to, hoping to, wanting it to, does not form the path we need to walk. We have to choose specific behaviors, practices, lifestyles, in order for our life to go a particular direction. And Kal gave us four very specific practices, that if we did them regularly, consistently, and with heart, would form the path we could travel that would take us to the future we so desire.

First, the scripture was **John 15:1-8**. Read this and we'll talk about it.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

**How did it speak to you about what it looks like spiritually to create your future?
Did it say anything to you that you could turn into specific practices?**

Kal then used the analogy of how a trellis supports the growth of a vine. The trellis is important only if it provides a strong and supportive structure for the growth of the vine. The vine is the most important thing, and can only grow on a strong trellis. So, these are four things that are essential to creating the future/growth we want, (the trellis to support the vine), especially during times like this are.

1. Make an honest commitment to spiritual growth

This is where it has to begin, and is the first post of your trellis. Talked about this awhile back. How does change happen? Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel *"The Sun Also Rises"*.

"How did you go bankrupt?" Bill asked.

"Two ways," Mike said. "Gradually and then suddenly."

This is a matter of will. A commitment to reorganize your life, build in spiritual habits and practices.

The bible continually speaks of change happening *"slowly and then all of a sudden"*. Lasting, life-giving change is incremental. Little, continuous, intentional, efforts over a long period of time.

Then you notice all those little changes as one giant change. If you want a specific future for yourself you have to commit to it. Believe and practice the truth of compounded effort.

2. Schedule a regular time of worship for your household

No getting around this. Second post of your trellis. Worship is the full, total surrender of self, (mind, heart, and body) towards something greater than yourself. You will worship something...what will you choose? We believe the better choice is God, corporately, in person, on Sunday morning. Realize this may not work for everyone. For some of you, virtual is the only way you can join us and we embrace that. But **worship is an essential component of moving us towards the person we desire to be and the life we want to have**.

Worship is transcendent, surrendering to something bigger than ourselves, God, and reorients our priorities. It reminds us it's not about us. BUT it reminds us even in our smallness we are not insignificant. We are important to God. And worship reminds us of that truth.

3. Connect to others, (a group), who've made the same commitment towards spiritual growth

No one can do this alone. Third post of your trellis. Even Jesus had his entourage. Talked about this last week in; **"Who rode with you?"** You're going to ride with some people. Will they lift/build you up, or hold you down? This is being with others who are willing to make significant commitments to something bigger than themselves, align their purpose with something that matters, help and encourage you on your journey, and hang in there no matter what. The surest way to struggle in your spiritual growth, is to believe you can do it alone. We just need people, a group, all committed, going in the same direction, we can do life with. If you don't do this, a group to belong to, you will stunt your spiritual growth. And we will help connect you to a group.

4. Find a way to give back

Fourth post of your trellis. Give to your church, community, and others. **Generosity is a posture and practice essential to our spiritual growth**. Surest path towards being the person you DON'T WANT TO BE, is to believe in scarcity, practice selfishness. Living life open-handed, holding onto the things of the world loosely will grow you into a person who will have the clearest, most life-giving priorities.

IV Challenge.

What our specific future is, and how church will look down the road is uncertain here at NCC. We can't tell you what gathering is going to look like in 6, 18, 24 months. But we were never called to pack a building, or maintain a weekend experience. **We were called to make disciples.** ALL OF US!! Committed, to do everything we can to make that the central focus of what we're about. We know if you call NCC church, God is calling you to be a part of that great work. All we can do is seek God, grow ourselves spiritually, and then provide you the best opportunity to do that for yourself. But you have to join with us. We're in this together.

Wrapping up series.

- 1. Learn to honestly reflect back and what have you learned about the world and yourself.**
- 2. Growing the skill and practice of gratitude.**
- 3. Choosing wisely the people who ride with you.**
- 4. Lastly, design a life that supports and creates the growth of the 'you', you want to become.**

We've got a long way to go to make it through this. But we have each other, a fully committed church, your engagement, and a God who wants us to be the best we can be through all of this. Answer to the question ***now what?*** A prayer when you get to the end of yourself. You're ready to question any assumptions you've held onto. **Commit to this process of seeking God, being obedient, one foot in front of the other.**

Here we go!!