

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday December 8, 2019. "Advent Conspiracy. Spend Less. Peace".

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru 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 Recap.

This is the second Sunday in our season of Advent. The inner preparation for not just Christmas...but the coming of Jesus. Last week we talked about hope, and tied it to the practice of worship. Not just attending church, but growing an awareness that God is everywhere. If we can work to grow that awareness, to actively regularly worship everywhere we are, then we can grow hope also. Advent is the four weeks prior to Christmas Day, and it gives us a focused time of work to prepare ourselves for making sure Christmas does a good work within us.

III Sunday.

Sunday we hit our second theme, peace. And we talked a bit about peace being more than the absence of conflict, (kind of cliché but we need the reminder), and that peace is really what we all want deep down. Peace means undivided, whole, complete, and can only come and be experienced when we stop chasing external things to fill that void or satisfy those desires within us.

Our primary passage was **Matthew 6:19-24**. Read it, we'll ask the usual questions then unpack it.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

How do you feel it could speak on the topic of peace?

Kal said there are three truths this passage gives us that can help us find that deeper, 'beefier', (yes beefier), peace than what we usually understand as peace.

1. Heart follows action.

We believe if we can control the passion of our hearts, make ourselves want to do the right things, then there will be this thing that grows in me to start to change my behavior. *"I'll do those things when I can grow this desire to want to do those things"*. Jesus is saying it's actually the other way around. If you start to incorporate actual activities, behaviors, practices in your life right now...even if you don't feel like it...your heart will eventually follow. And it's in this truth and practicing it, that true peace can be found.

Knowing this is a scriptural truth how have you found it to be true in your life?

2. Your heart and will is only big enough to fully devote itself to one thing.

At some point competing objects for your heart will force you to choose one of them. You cannot fully commit all of who you are, what is important to you, what you direct your life towards, if there is something else demanding that same attention. It's like wanting full water pressure when you have a leak in the line. The *"desires of your heart"* are what drive your search for peace. It's when we stop listening to the world's definition of peace, and unify our heart towards God, we'll find true peace.

How have you experienced a 'divided heart', more than one thing competing for your attention?

3. Of all the things that will compete for your heart, stuff is the biggest threat.

We tend to focus on physical temptations, because they feel so...tempting. We focus on these because if I can point out the sins of others then I don't have to deal with my own. Jesus said; out of all of those things that will lure us, tempt us, make claim on our heart, cause us to stumble and fall, stuff will be the most successful and dangerous. Jesus in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, said, one of the non-producing soils are thorns and those represents the *"worries of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth"* The other two poor soils were no faith and shallow untested faith. The biggest threats are worry...and stuff. Jesus made a strong claim stuff would snuff out our faith.

Where do you struggle the most with material things?

IV Challenge.

If we want to genuinely seek, do the things we know we need to do to find peace, we're going to have to commit to the work of it. And incorporate the above truths into our...yes...wait for it...ordinary, every day, walking around life. And to know not only do we have to work on these things, we have to remember it's a process. We're not going to turn our life around overnight. And this peace the scriptures speak about will come over time and in bursts. Growth is never linear nor consistent. We commit to a process of growth, to specific things it takes to make that growth happen, and to the patience it takes to keep going when there will be huge chunks of time we don't see or feel any progress.

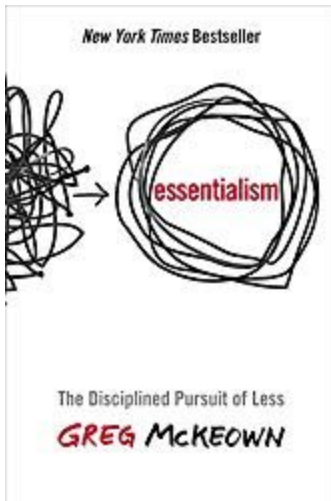
And when we begin to see and feel growth in our ability to experience peace in our own souls, then we can begin to work on being a peacemaker in the world around us. Jesus called people who make peace, who create environments where peace can grow and flourish, the *"children of God"*, then we can create the world we so desperately want and people are clamoring for.

What are one or two steps you can take to begin to incorporate into your daily life?

As a bonus we are including a document that provided some of the source material for this topic, and was featured during the message. I would recommend getting the book, but here is a VERY brief overview to help you apply some specific principles in this journey of becoming a person who find this kind of peace.

You're welcome.

Some essentials about *Essentialism* by Greg McKeown •



Definition: Author Greg McKeown says the most fitting definition of essentialism is “less but better.”

Basic Value Proposition: “Only once you give yourself the permission to stop trying to do it all, stop saying yes to everyone, can you make your highest contribution towards the things that really matter.”

One Takeaway: “If you take one thing away from this book, I hope you will remember this: whatever decision or challenge or crossroads you face in your life, simply ask yourself, ‘What is essential?’ Eliminate everything else.”

10 Life (& Work) Hacks from *Essentialism*.

Essentialism #1: Design space in your life to escape.

“Without great solitude no serious work is possible.” — Pablo Picasso

- “We need **space to escape** in order to discern the essential few from the trivial many. Unfortunately, In our **time-starved era** we don’t get that space by default—only by design.”
- “By being selective he bought himself space, and in that space he found creative freedom.”
- “For some reason there is a false association with the word focus. As with choice, people tend to think of focus as a thing. Yes, focus is something we have. But focus is also something we do...In order to have focus we need to escape to focus.”
- “He knew that making his highest point of contribution on a task required that he create the space for unencumbered thought.”

- Check out what some other people do when it comes to **digital minimalism** and **digital decluttering**)

Essentialism #2: Spend time exploring.

“When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing positive knowledge.” — Albert Einstein

- “If you believe **being overly busy and overextended is evidence of productivity**, then you probably believe that creating space to explore, think, and reflect should be kept to a minimum. Yet these very activities are the antidote to the **nonessential busyness** that infects so many of us.”
- “Essentialists spend as much time as possible exploring, listening, debating, questioning, and thinking. But their exploration is not an end in itself. The purpose of the exploration is to discern the vital few from the trivial many.”
- “This is why an Essentialist takes the time to explore all his options. The extra investment is justified because some things are so much more important that they repay the effort invested in finding those things tenfold. An Essentialist, in other words, discerns more so he can do less.”
- “Play leads to brain plasticity, adaptability, and creativity. Nothing fires up the brain like play.” (Stuart Brown, founder of the National Institute for Play)
- “There are two ways to think about Essentialism. The first is to think of it as something you do occasionally. The second is to think of it as something you are. In the latter, it is a different way—a simpler way—of doing everything. It becomes a lifestyle.”

Essentialism #3: Realize you have a choice.

*“In a few hundred years, when the history of our time will be written from a long-term perspective, it is likely that the most important event historians will see is not technology, not the Internet, not e-commerce. It is an unprecedented change in the human condition. **For the first time—literally—substantial and rapidly growing numbers of people have choices. For the first time, they will have to manage themselves. And society is totally unprepared for it.**” —*

Peter Drucker

- “We have lost our ability to filter what is important and what isn’t. Psychologists call this **‘decision fatigue’**: the more choices we are forced to make, the more the quality of our decisions deteriorates.”
- “Our options may be things, but a choice—a **choice is an action**.”
- “Focusing on the essentials is a choice. It is your choice. That in itself is incredibly liberating.”
- “To become an Essentialist requires a heightened awareness of our ability to choose.

Essentialism #4: Define your purpose.

*“The crime which bankrupts men and states is that of **job-work**;—declining from your main design to serve a turn here or there.”* — Ralph Waldo Emerson

- “Jim Collins’s Good to Great, in which he contends if there’s one thing you are passionate about—and that you can be best at—you should do just that one thing.”
- “Inspirational + Concrete = Essential Intent (makes one decision that eliminates 1,000 later decisions)”
- “Creating an essential intent is hard. It takes courage, insight, and foresight to see which activities and efforts will add up to your single highest point of contribution. It takes asking tough questions, making real trade-offs, and exercising serious discipline to cut out the competing priorities that distract us from our true intention. Yet it is worth the effort because only with real clarity of purpose can people, teams, and organizations fully mobilize and achieve something truly excellent.”
- “**Mohandas K. Gandhi** — Suddenly, he found a **higher purpose**: the liberation of the oppressed everywhere. With his new singleness of purpose, he eliminated everything else from his life. He called the process ‘reducing himself to zero.’”

Essentialism #5: Focus on the vital few.

“You cannot overestimate the unimportance of practically everything.” — John Maxwell

- “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” (Stephen R. Covey)
- “The word priority came into the English language in the 1400s. It was singular. It meant the very first or prior thing. It stayed singular for the next five hundred years. Only in the 1900s did we pluralize the term and start talking about priorities.”

- “The iconoclastic entrepreneur and venture capitalist Peter Thiel took ‘less but better’ to an unorthodox level when he insisted that PayPal employees select one single priority in their role — and focus on that exclusively. As PayPal executive Keith Rabois recalls: ‘Peter required that everyone be tasked with exactly one priority. He would refuse to discuss virtually anything else with you except what was currently assigned as your #1 initiative. Even our annual review forms in 2001 required each employee to identify their single most valuable contribution to the company.’”
- “I do believe in **simplicity**. It is astonishing as well as sad, how many trivial affairs even the wisest thinks he must attend to in a day;...so simplify the problem of life, distinguish the necessary and the real.” (Henry David Thoreau).

Essentialism #6: Move from motion sickness to momentum.

“To follow, without halt, one aim: There is the secret to success.” — Anna Pavlova

- “Moved from a state of motion sickness to **momentum**...Instead of making just a millimeter of progress in a million directions he began to generate tremendous momentum towards accomplishing the things that were truly vital.”
- “The result is that by investing in fewer things we have the satisfying experience of making significant progress in the things that matter most.”
- “Dieter Rams was the lead designer at Braun for many years. He is driven by the idea that almost everything is noise. He believes very few things are essential. His job is to filter through that noise until he gets to the essence.”
- “Essentialism is a systematic discipline for discerning what is absolutely essential, then eliminating everything that is not.”

Essentialism #7: Be the CEO — Chief Editing Officer.

“There are no solutions. There are only trade-offs.” — Thomas Sowell

- “Ignoring the reality of trade-offs is a terrible strategy for organizations. It turns out to be a terrible strategy for people as well.”
- “Essentialists see trade-offs as an inherent part of life, not as an inherently negative part of life. Instead of asking, ‘What do I have to give up?’ they ask, ‘What do I want to go big on?’ The cumulative impact of this small change in thinking can be profound.”

- “Jack Dorsey...he said he thinks of the role of CEO as being the chief editor of the company. ‘As an editor I am constantly taking these inputs and deciding the one, or intersection of a few, that make sense for what we are doing.’”
- “Becoming an Essentialist means making cutting, condensing, and correcting a natural part of our daily routine—making editing a natural cadence in our lives.”
- “To attain knowledge add things every day. To attain wisdom, subtract things every day.”
(Lao-tzu)

Essentialism #8: Say “NO”.

“Half of the troubles of this life can be traced to saying yes too quickly and not saying no soon enough.” — Josh Billings

- “We need to learn the slow ‘yes’ and the quick ‘no.’” (Tom Friel)
- “This doesn’t mean you have to be cynical about people. I don’t mean to imply that people shouldn’t be trusted. I am simply saying everyone is selling something—an idea, a viewpoint, an opinion—in exchange for your time. Simply being aware of what is being sold allows us to be more deliberate in deciding whether we want to buy it.”
- “Entrepreneurs succeed when they say ‘yes’ to the right project, at the right time, in the right way. To accomplish this, they have to **be good at saying ‘no’** to all their other ideas.” (Reid Hoffman)
- “It was like he was majoring in minor activities.”
- “Anytime you fail to say ‘no’ to a nonessential, you are really saying yes by default.”

Essentialism #9: Sleeeeeeeep.

- “The second most important factor differentiating the best violinists from the good violinists was actually sleep. The best violinists slept an average of 8.6 hours in every twenty-four-hour period: about an hour longer than the average American. Over the period of a week they also spent an average of 2.8 hours of napping in the afternoon: about two hours longer than the average.” (Note: Think about this when designing your **24 hours per day**)
- “Some good news for the early birds and night owls among us: science shows that even a **nap can increase creativity.**”

- “Even a brief period of deep sleep, in other words, helps us make the kinds of new connections that allow us to better explore our world. In a nutshell, sleep is what allows us to operate at our highest level of contribution so that we can achieve more, in less time.”

Essentialism #10: Do it all over again (and again and again) with a routine.

“Every day do something that will inch you closer to a better tomorrow.” — Doug Firebaugh

- “**Everyday progress** — even a small win’ can make all the difference in how people feel and perform. ‘Of all the things that can boost emotions, motivation, and perceptions during a workday, the single most important is making progress in meaningful work.’” (Amiable and Kramer)
- “The Essentialist **designs a routine** that makes achieving what you have identified as essential the default position. Yes, in some instances an Essentialist still has to work hard, but with the right routine in place each effort yields exponentially greater results.”
- “There is a huge body of scientific research to explain the mechanism by which routine enables difficult things to become easy.”
- “The right routines can actually enhance innovation and creativity by giving us the equivalent of an energy rebate.”
- “The work Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has done on creativity demonstrates how highly creative people use strict routines to free up their minds. ‘Most creative individuals find out early what their best rhythms are for sleeping, eating, and working, and abide by them even when it is tempting to do otherwise. They wear clothes that are comfortable, they interact only with people they find congenial, they do only things they think are important. Of course, such idiosyncrasies are not endearing to those they have to deal with...But personalizing patterns of action helps to free the mind from the expectations that make demands on attention and allows intense concentration on matters that count.’”