

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**Sunday May 1, 2022. "The seasons of our spiritual life: winter."**

### **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 still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're now well in 2022 and we've got some big things planned. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. Our children's area is expanding and we are retooling our student ministry. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can check all that out through our newly upgraded app, and social media sites. We're so encouraged by 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 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 Sunday.**

So, we made a big announcement. YAY!! More to come.

We started an interesting and hopefully helpful new series Sunday. *"The seasons of our spiritual life"*.

We recognize that our relationship with God, and any spiritual growth we experience seems to happen in bursts. And then there are prolonged times of what just feels like no movement at all.

Living in a western Protestant work ethic culture of 'produce, produce, produce', where our value and worth are tied up in how hard we hustle, those moments of deadness can just be difficult to deal with. But, the more time we spend in scripture, the more we realize we were designed, created, to have seasons of great growth and then seasons of dormant silence and stillness. And if we can understand this intentional design, live into those natural rhythms, seasons, then we can reconnect with God on a much deeper and more meaningful level.

**But first, have you experienced the ups and downs in your spiritual life?**

**How did you deal with or make it through those?**

**In your experience, and those moments, what did you learn about yourself and God?**

Our scripture was **Psalm 62:5-8**. The entire psalm is only 12 verses long, so you can read the whole psalm for context, but we will focus primarily on verses 5-8. The NRSV is a great version to get a more accurate intent of the writer. Read it and we'll dig through it.

**What jumped out to you about this passage?**

**How did you understand being with God in those still times?**

Let's center on our first season, winter first, and then find some truths from the passage. Katherine May who has written about 'wintering' said this. And we will pull out the important words.

***"Wintering is the courage to stare down the worst parts of our experience and to commit to healing them the best we can. Wintering is a moment of intuition, our true needs felt keenly as a knife."***

-Some important words.

**Courage**- fully acknowledge the reality of life, and gather resources to face it.

**Worst**- winter is actually real and difficult, and needs to be faced.

**Commit**- takes an intentional dedication to do the work.

**Healing**- significant good being done, even if you can't feel it in the moment.

**Felt**- isn't just a knowledge thing. We experience this with our entire being.

**What do each of these words mean to you, and how would you use them to help face the 'winters' of your life?**

So, now **Psalm 62:5-8**. The passage in the NRSV says; *"my soul waits in silence"*. There is so much in this phrase alone about the benefits and importance of waiting and stillness and silence. We live in a society that loves and is full of noise and hurry. We like to brag about how busy we are, and we even fill our less active times with noise...stuff. Music, TV, and more are wonderful, but can mask what God may be trying to tell us. This psalm also says in this stillness, sitting in silence, we find God to be our rock, our fortress, our refuge. And it's only in the moments we create in which we eliminate all of the distractions, sit in the quiet silence of our 'winter', we can find the God we need.

Let's engage some of the specific truths from this passage.

**How are you with 'waiting'? What makes it difficult or easy for you?**

**How are you with 'silence', 'stillness'? Do you get fidgety? Can you just sit for moments and not do anything? Why or why not and what do you attribute it to?**

The other truth is doing the work to make God our rock, fortress, refuge. And in those winter moments in your life having a safe place of refuge to just sit in stillness is absolutely essential.

**What do these descriptions of God mean to you?**

**In what ways could you grow closer to God and let him be this in your life?**

**What things are standing in your way in being able to depend on God, and be with him in this way?**

### **III Challenge.**

The final challenge will not just be information. My guess is you already 'know' the things you need to know. It's putting these truths into practice. Within the service we had a time of mediation. Kal guided us through some steps and questions to just be with God.

Let's do an abbreviated one. Get in a quiet place, put your phone on silent, sit with both feet flat on the floor, hands open on your lap. Close your eyes and take several deep, slow breaths. And meditate on these.

**When have you been or are you in a winter place now?**

**What does it feel like? What feels empty, missing, that you need?**

**What do you need from God right now? Not a list but from him for you personally?**

**Where can God meet you right now?**

**What is something you can learn, understand, that will help you in your winter?**

**Now just 'be' with God with no talking. Just sit in silence and stillness.**

God wants to be our refuge, our fortress, our rock especially in those winter moments in our life. We just have to slow down enough, remove the noise and be with him. And you will discover how amazing it is to have a vital, real, complete relationship with God. Even in the dead of your winter.