

2024

Sermon Series" We Grow, We Mature, We Produce! Devotional
Sermon Subject" Let's Grow!

WEEK ONE DEVOTIONAL

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Foundational Scriptures:

[Galatians 5:22-23 ESV](#)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

[Ephesians 5:17-21 ESV](#)

¹⁷ Therefore, do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[2 Peter 3:18 ESV](#)

¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

[Matthew 7:15-20 ESV](#)

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits.

Helpful Hints to manage this devotional:

- Set aside 1 hour each day for time with God and his word.
- **Suggestion:** 30 minutes possibly in the morning, 30 minutes in the evening.
- Read, and write daily at your pace so that by the weekend you have completed the weeks devotional. The design is that you don't have to find a starting point to study, just do it. Get an accountability partner to read and study the devotional.

Necessary Endings, Dr. Henry Cloud, in chapter 2, deals with Pruning. Pruning is a process of "proactive endings." A rose bush cannot reach its full potential without a very systematic method of Pruning. The Gardner intentionally and purposefully cuts off branches and buds that fall into three categories.

1. healthy buds/branches that aren't the best of ones.
2. sick branches that are not going to get well.

3. dead branches that are taking up space needed for the healthy ones to thrive.

1. For the bush to thrive, it can't keep all the buds it produces; some must go. The caretaker constantly examines the bush to see which buds are worthy of the plant's limited fuel and support, cutting the others away. He prunes them. He ends their role in the life of the bush and puts an end to the bush's having to divert resources to them. The Gardner frees the resources so the plant can redirect them to the buds with the greatest potential to become mature roses. Growth depends on getting rid of the unwanted or extra, Dr. Cloud says.

Pruning is a necessity of life for those rose bushes, without the endings you don't get the best roses.

2. Some branches are sick and diseased and will never make it. The Gardner monitors, may water, and even fertilize them, trying to make them healthy, but at some point, he realizes that more water, more fertilizer, and even more care are just NOT going to help. For whatever reason, they will not become what he needs them to be to create the final picture of beauty he is looking for.

3. Some branches are dead and are just taking up space. The healthy branches need that room to reach their full length and potential. They cannot thrive and spread while dead branches force them to bend and turn corners. They should be growing straight for the goal. The dead ones are cut away to give the healthy branches room to grow.

Pruning enables rose bushes to bloom and reach their full potential. If it works with rose bushes in the natural, it also has to work in the spiritual.

Relevant Question: Do you know what needs watering, fertilizing, and cutting down in your life so that you may grow and reach your full fullest potential?

You were not meant to live an "average" life and far less than you were designed to be. A new year is a good time for "Pruning."

Opening Premise: Paul encourages the believer through the book of Galatians, writing to defend and clarify the truth of the gospel.

[Galatians 2:5 ESV](#)

⁵to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. ⁵to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

[Galatians 2:16 ESV](#)

¹⁶yet we know that a person is not justified^[a] by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

He does this in 3 ways:

1. Defends his message and authority as an apostle.
2. Consider the OT basis of the gospel message.
3. Demonstrated how his message worked practically in daily Christian living.

Good bible study starts with a series of questions.

1. Who is talking?
2. Who is the text talking to?
3. What is the text saying?
4. What is the text saying to me?
5. How can I apply what the text is saying?

In Ephesians, Paul encourages the people to "be not drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit. At salvation, the believer has the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Yet, the biblical admonition is to **BE FILLED**, to surrender control to the control of the Holy Spirit. Being filled is a "daily" process! Go out **FULL** and return **EMPTY** to be refilled again and again and again...get it?

[Galatians 5:23 ESV](#)

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

[Read vs. 1-21](#)

Spirit vs. Flesh

The Spirit vs The Flesh is largely the issue in [Galatians 5](#). The freedom that the believer has by grace far exceeds the bondage of the Law. The act of circumcision was a constant hurdle as Paul argued that to be justified by the Law was the exact opposite of being justified by God's grace.

Paul says in [verse 14](#) that to love your neighbor as yourself fulfills the whole Law.

The Galatian believers were in a struggle! A spiritual struggle that Paul reminds them that their sufficiency is not in themselves but in the Spirit.

The Spirit is...

A. Sufficient to Overcome the Flesh

[Galatians 2:16-17 ESV](#)

¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified^[a] by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. ¹⁷ But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

WALK! When it's easier to bite back or fight back, Paul says we do not do that. **WALK** in the Spirit!

How, Pastor, can I walk in the Spirit when people do what they do, etc?

God pours his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

You will never be able to love others as you should; you cannot do **vs13-15** without the reality to which Paul points in **vs16-26**.

We must walk!

Galatians 2:16 ESV

¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified^[a] by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. We must be led!

Galatians 2:18 ESV

¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

We must sow to the Spirit!

Galatians 6:8 ESV

⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

What keeps us when we are frustrated over our desires in the flesh, avoiding discouragement, keeps us engaged in the fight against the flesh, striving against a short temper or bitterness, jealousy, strife, gluttony, lust, or despondency?

The Spirit does, its mind over flesh!

B. Sufficient in Avoiding the Curse

Galatians 5:18-21 ESV

¹⁸ But if the Spirit leads, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy,^[a] drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do^[b] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Spirit is sufficient in our daily battle against the flesh and our pursuit of the kingdom of God.

You've heard the phrase "live by the sword, I'd by the sword?"

It's also true: live by the flesh, die by the flesh.

Don't live to eat; eat to live! Don't fork yourself to death by eating all the wrong things, then ask God to deliver you from a "lil" sugar! No no no!

How to Eat to Live by Elijah Muhammad

Paul juxtaposes that those who live and practice the works of the flesh are under a curse and will therefore not inherit the kingdom of God in verses 19-21; those who express, exhibit, and possess the fruit of the Spirit can and will inherit the kingdom of God.

Key phrase: those who are led by the Spirit and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit will receive an "eschatological reward."

Galatians 6:7-8 ESV

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Warning: Be careful how and who leads you!

C. Sufficient to Fulfill the Law

Galatians 5:22-23 ESV

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. We fulfill the Law by loving, **NOT** liking!

Romans 13:8-10 ESV

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Love is the very thing the Spirit creates in the believer's life. Love is the chief of the Spirit's fruits. Love is mentioned first in the list. Love is primary; love contains the whole of all that God desires and requires of us.

Love ought to mark our lives as Christians; we are to be known by how we love one another and the world. Love ought to mark the church as well. Where else should you look for love if you can't find love at church? It was love that lifted me!

Love Lifted Me by James Rowe

The hymn's lyrics are inspired primarily by the 14th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, wherein the Twelve Apostles when caught in a storm, see Jesus appearing to walk on

water. In the account, Saint Peter attempts to walk toward Jesus while in the water but begins to sink.

I was sinking deep in sin
Far from the peaceful shore
Very deeply stained within
Sinking to rise no more
But the master of the sea
Heard my despairing cry,
From the waters lifted me
Now safe, am I
Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help
Love lifted me
Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help
Love lifted me!

"Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place." Zora Neale Hurston

[1 Peter 4:8 ESV](#)

⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Love is the character of God manifested in a relationship!

[1 John 4:7-8 ESV](#)

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

It's not an accident or coincidence that the 1st listed is "love."

Love is a function, **NOT** a feeling. It is the duty of every believer; Dr. R. Timothy Jones says in his book "Vital Signs."

[John 13:35 ESV](#)

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Paul says in [1 Corinthians 13](#) that to possess "spiritual gifts," have mountain-moving faith, and do alms to and for people, but if we do not love, we are nothing.

Suggested reading...Love Does by Bob Goff

Love **IS**, Love **Does**, Love **Is NOT**, and Love **does NOT**!

READ LUKE 10:27-37

Luke 6:27-28 ESV

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

Have you ever had to love an enemy? Use the space below to write what that looked like. If not, what should it look like?

"Let no man pull you low enough to hate him."

Martin Luther King Jr

Questions for discussion

1. How can we love each other deeply according to I Peter 4:8
2. How is love different from a feeling and a function?
3. Using I [Corinthians 13:4-8](#), list the things you are and are not.

Monday Suggested Reading:

[John 3:16-17](#)

[1 John 4:8-10](#)

How can you celebrate the love of God in your life?

Tuesday Suggested Reading:

[I John 4:20-21](#)

[Romans 8:13](#)

[I Peter 4:8](#)

Ask God for forgiveness for times when you didn't show, give grace.

Wednesday Suggested Reading:

[Romans 5:8](#)

[Romans 8:37-39](#)

Thank God for not giving you what you deserved.

Thursday Suggested Reading:

[John 13:34-35](#)

[I John 4:11-12](#)

Ask God to increase your capacity to love.

Friday Suggested Reading:

[I Corinthians 16:14](#)

[Galatians 5:14](#)

Express the love of God to someone today.