

Friday: *Living Like You Are...*

Read: 1 John 3:11-18 ¹¹ For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another... ¹³... ¹⁴... Whoever does not love abides in death... ¹⁶... he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Reflect:
The letters of John (1-3 John) have a lot to say about living in community. The words in v11 ought to sound familiar (cf. Jn13:34-35). They have ties all the way back into the Old Testament (e.g., Mt22:36-40; cf. Deut6:5; Lev19:18).

What do these verses have to do with being made more holy? Simple; if we don't love our fellow Christians – then how are we going to love others who are not a part of “the family of God”?

Loving people is a choice, not an emotion. In v17 John doesn't say “if you don't feel like helping them that's OK”. He says if you don't help your “family member” – then God's love does not abide in you. Based on Jesus' words in John 15, that is not a pleasant thought (cf. Jn15:2,6-8). The Bible commands us to act, even if we don't feel like it. Fortunately right feelings will frequently follow right actions (though perhaps not immediately). So, since loving others is a choice, I think you can see how our part in the sanctification process is also a choice...

Pray: Pray for Prairie View Christian Camp; another mission New Life regularly supports. Pray for the continuing affects of this past Sunday's worship “service”. Pray for Bob Griffin, Larry Hayes, and Roy Andrews – elders of New Life – pray they are truly led by God as they serve Him. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

Respond:
Are you aware of any unhealthy relationships at New Life? What can you do about them?

Are there unmet needs within the body of New Life? What can you do about them? Do others know about them?

When was the last time you did the right thing, regardless of how you felt? What was the result?

Saturday: *Why It's Important...*

Read: John 17:20-23 ²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me... ²²... ²³... so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Reflect:
Why all the fuss about sanctification? Isn't it enough that “I'm saved”? In a word – NO! An attitude like that may be an American (or Western) attitude (i.e., individualism), but it certainly is not a Godly attitude (cf. Gen12:1-3).

The reason we work at our sanctification is because God calls us to be holy; He is holy (e.g., 1Pet1:15). The reason it matters that we are set apart for service is because God desires to work through us. It's mind blowing when you think about it...but we (“the church” – God's people) are how He is going to reconcile the world to Himself.

V23 says that the world will know through what we do. It is why we must be continually sanctified – the eternal destiny of others hinges on it. That isn't to frighten us...as the past five days have shown, God is willing to do His part. With His help we cannot fail.

Pray: Pray for the National Missionary Convention; another mission New Life regularly supports. Confess to God your desire to be made more holy so you can be used by Him – pray for that desire to grow. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag – deacons of New Life – pray they are truly led by God as they serve.

Respond:
Do you struggle with a burden for lost people if you, and many, of your family are “saved”?

Are you continuing to pray for people on your list who need to enter into a covenant relationship with God?

How many people do you think God wants to reach through His work at New Life?

More Holy...Why?

May 3 – 9

I went to Washburn University for one year and I loved being on the football team. It was great and being a part of a good team was exciting. We only finished five and six that year, but we really were a solid team. We unfortunately had some bad breaks in three really close games that could have went our way (we were five and two at one point, but then we lost by 3 to Pittsburg State and never really recovered).

Game days were the best. There is little like the competitive nature of sports. Being a good team is also a plus – but even on average teams (which we turned out to be) it can be satisfying if the overwhelming percentage of the time you “win” in your position. That thought can be a steadying source when the overall team performance was not quite good enough. However, at the time, I must admit that I would have traded my good (and sometimes stellar) individual performances for more team wins. Yet now I must say it is satisfying seeing some good stats in my team book – and online ☺

Yep, being a part of the football team was great. Yet it wasn't enough to keep me at Washburn. I moved on from there and wound up at Manhattan Christian College, to better prepare myself for service in God's Kingdom.

OK, in reality I was only on special teams. But I did have some stellar games. I mean I loved playing football at Washburn! Well OK, I didn't really even play on special teams either. But I was integral to the team as a scout player. Playing football at the collegiate level was a blast! Actually, truth be known, I wasn't really on the team – but I loved Washburn football while I went there! OK, OK, I never even went to a game (and yes I did go to Washburn for a year) – but I was still a loyal Ichabod fan. Yeah, and Elvis will be doing special music next week on Mother's Day at New Life...

The above scenario is a bit ludicrous isn't it? Claiming to not only be on a college football team, but to be a standout on the team – when in reality I was not on the team (and didn't even try out for it) – is foolish.

It's sort of like when people say they love being a Christian – but don't want to put forth any effort...isn't it?

OK, now that your starting to get over being upset at me for “telling a story” and then “sucker punching you” – do you see the truth in what I've done? No one in their right mind would claim to have been a standout football player on a team just eight years ago if he never even tried out for the team. Why? Among other things, no effort was put forth in becoming a part of the team; plus he would be found to be a fraud.

So why will many Christians today claim they love Jesus, but not take the process of sanctification seriously? I don't know, but I have some ideas...

I trust our worship “service” this morning, as well as the insert this week, will help you to see that sanctification (being made more holy for God's use) is something worth striving for and something you can enjoy. This is not because it's easy (a worthless word), but because you see it is worthwhile.

Monday: Where It All Starts...

Read: John 17:17¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

<p>Reflect: Just one verse? For an entire day of reflection? It doesn't seem like much, but a lot can be learned from a single "verse" of Scripture. E.g., "Jesus wept" (Jn11:35). Wow...the Son of God wept. God in flesh (i.e., incarnate) wept. What does that tell us about God? Is God not moved by the current state of the "world"? The actions of Jesus indicate He is (cf. Jn5:36; 9:3-6; 14:10).</p> <p>The word "sanctify" means to set apart. The underlying connotation of the word is that one is set apart for service. The word for "sanctify" (<i>hagiazō</i>) is closely related to the word for "holy" (<i>hagios</i>), which is also translated as "saints" when used as a plural noun (e.g., Rom1:7; 1Cor1:2; 2Cor1:1).</p> <p>Sanctification (becoming more holy) is a lifelong process. We may become "more holy" in one part of our life quickly (e.g., kick an addiction, start to serve others sacrificially), but there is always more work to be done (e.g., sacrificial monetary giving, healing damaged relationships). Our standard is Jesus (e.g., 1Cor11:1); the Bible (and the Holy Spirit) will show us where we need the work.</p>	<p>Respond: What is your favorite verse of Scripture? Why? Read 20 verses before and after it. Has your understanding of it changed at all?</p> <p>Do you have a desire to become "more holy"? Have you shared that with anyone?</p> <p>Has your giving increased lately (e.g., this year)? Our spending does indicate what we value...</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for the CEA; a mission New Life regularly supports. Thank God for our worship "service" yesterday; pray the affects of what was started will truly be God glorifying. Confess to God any sins you have not made known to Him – that is a part of sanctification. Continue to pray for workers in God's Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).</p>	

Tuesday: An Initial Step...

Read: Isaiah 6:8⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

<p>Reflect: We often sing songs about wanting to see God's face, or be in His presence, or... While I don't doubt the sincerity – I sometimes wonder if we realize what it is we're singing. When Isaiah found himself in God's presence he knew he didn't belong there (Isa6:5). Fortunately God was (and is) gracious (Isa6:6-7) – but I wonder if that was painful?</p> <p>On the thought of that coal, and wondering how much it must have (might have) hurt, is the process of our sanctification (becoming more holy) any different? Let's face it; there are difficulties in being made more holy. But it is so worth it!</p> <p>God won't sanctify us without our cooperation. This is why the response of Isaiah is so crucial. There was a need, and he was willing to be used by God. He was willing to continue the process of sanctification (being made more holy for service). I sometimes wonder if Isaiah realized the duty for which he was volunteering himself...</p>	<p>Respond: How has God been gracious to you this last week?</p> <p>What are two things you will do today to show that you are in a continual process of being made more holy for God's service?</p> <p>What was a 'painful' sanctification experience/process you've been through – but now see as so worthwhile? Are you currently in one of those?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for Lincoln Christian Seminary, Manhattan Christian College, and Ozark Christian College; missions New Life regularly supports. Pray for a willing heart to say "here am I, send me!" Pray for the unity and purity of New Life. Continue to pray for God's people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).</p>	

Wednesday: Assurance...

Read: Isaiah 58:9⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'

<p>Reflect: Wow. Maybe you should read Isaiah 6:8 again (Tuesday). Now reread the verse for today. The same word ("Here am I" / "Here I am") is used in each verse. It's mindboggling to think about. We volunteer (or are overwhelmed with the sense of urgency) to serve God (Here am I) and when it seems we may be at our wits end, if we call out to God, He'll answer our call ("Here I am"). God is there for us!</p> <p>It's so comforting to know that God will support us in our efforts to serve Him (read Isaiah 58 and see the effort being put into fasting – a discipline many utilize in the sanctification process). We have assurance He'll always be there for us as we seek to glorify Him.</p> <p>As you know, Jesus indicates He'll always be with us too (cf. Matt28:18-20). We also have the promise of the Holy Spirit's guidance (e.g., Jn16). All of this is wonderful news. God calls us to be holy (e.g., 1Pet1:16; Lev11:44), and He will equip us to have it happen. In other words, if we're not becoming "more holy" (i.e., sanctified), we're likely not trusting in God – or doing our part – it is a team effort.</p>	<p>Respond: When was the last time you called out to God and He answered you? How has your life changed in response to what He's done?</p> <p>Have you ever fasted before? What was it like for you?</p> <p>How comforting is it to know that God will assist you in the process of sanctification? What is an area of your life you desire to submit to Him?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools; two local missions we regularly support. Confess to God an area of your life you want to surrender to Him; trust the Holy Spirit will help you. Thank God for His faithfulness towards us. Continue to pray for God's Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).</p>	

Thursday: You Already Are...

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:2² To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

<p>Reflect: If anyone "in Christ" is wondering about this sanctification deal, wondering if it is worth it, I have news for you. You already are "sanctified"! What I mean by that is that you are already set apart for service to God. The question then becomes, "Are you living up to that calling?"</p> <p>That question isn't intended to point out anyone's shortcomings. Let's face it; we all have shortcomings in our lives. I'm certain we've all served God in glorious ways; I'm also certain we've all dishonored Him in "shameful" ways. Don't let "shameful" get you down. God doesn't shame us...</p> <p>The Holy Spirit does convict us – if we respond appropriately we change (sanctification) and are comforted. If we resist, the conviction may intensify – or our own emotions may take over and guilt/shame sets in – that isn't God's design for us. He desires our sanctification, not our remorse (which doesn't bring about change, only pity parties). We're already "set apart" for service. We can forge ahead with the Holy Spirit empowering us...or we can face the torment of our own thoughts knowing we ought to be doing "better".</p>	<p>Respond: Do you take comfort in v2, knowing you're not alone in your faith?</p> <p>How have you served God in the past – what brings a smile to your face as you think about it?</p> <p>Do you believe God doesn't want to shame you? If not, please talk with me nerb7@yahoo.com.</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for Cookson Hills; a mission New Life regularly supports. Ask God to help you be more obedient to the Holy Spirit. Pray for Brent McCrory; preaching minister at New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God's Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.</p>	