

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

SEPTEMBER 23 - 27, 2019

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

SERMON SERIES 9/8 - 11/24



MONDAY

1 John 2:12-14

We went to Alaska a few summers ago and experienced the super growth of local gardens due to the nearly endless hours of sunshine in July. Life was evident everywhere. Where there is life, there will be growth. And where there is growth, there is life. And that is true in the spiritual realm. God, who gave us spiritual life in Christ, offers us a chance to grow; and this results in a life that offers the opportunity to grow into maturity. It is a privilege and responsibility for us, and the goal of spiritual development is to become like Christ.

Spiritual growth is predictable; it is not mystical. It is also not sentimental or devotional. It is not due to an event or a decision. It is not due to secret insight any more than your body's growth is due to any of them. All growth is a *process*.

We give our children nutritious foods so that their bodies will grow and develop, and it's the same in the spiritual dimension. It is a process of taking in the Truth of God and growing on the basis of believing and responding to that Truth. You will not grow spiritually without the intentional growth in understanding God's Word. Jesus said, "*Man does not live by bread alone, but he lives by every word that comes from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4). Spiritual growth is predictably related to an increase in your understanding of God's revelation.

There may be some misconceptions about spiritual growth that we can dispel. It has nothing to do with your standing before God; that's fixed. It has nothing to do with God's love for you that is established for all eternity. It is not dependent upon time. There are people who have been Christians for a long time and they're not mature. And there are people who have been Christians a short time who are experiencing rapid growth. Spiritual growth is not dependent upon information, or even biblical information, because you can have a glut of information that's not applied. Busyness in the church or in the Word does not equate spiritual maturity. Growth has nothing to do with prosperity, power, size of your church, or material wealth (or lack thereof).

When you examine your day-to-day life, where are you intentionally taking in God's spiritual nourishment to grow and mature? What steps will you take to set new goals to walk daily in the light of Christ?

QUESTIONS

What are your goals for spiritual growth this year? What or who has impacted your spiritual growth in this last year or two?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for Anna and Brian Kleinsasser, who have served with YWAM in Heredia, Costa Rica, since 2018 and previously served with YWAM in Kansas City.

TUESDAY

1 John 2:12, 13c

There is a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in the Madrid newspaper. The ad read: “Dear Pablo, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father.” On Saturday, 800 Pablo’s showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers. This story touches all of us because it speaks of our greatest need.

What is your greatest need? If you’re sick, you may think, “My greatest need is to be healed of this illness.” If you have a child who is ensnared in drugs, you may think, “My greatest need is for my child to be free from his/her addiction.” If your marriage is difficult, you may think, “My greatest need is marital harmony.” If you are unemployed, you may think, “My greatest need is to have a job.” If your church is in the midst of struggles and tensions, you may think, “My greatest need is to go to another church.” These are all very important needs, but not our greatest need.

“I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name” (1 John 2:12). John, as a pastor, is writing to his church that is going through a crisis. This once vibrant, unified congregation has begun to be torn apart. There are false teachers

and false prophets in their midst. This letter is designed to help them understand how they can discern the truth from the false teachers and false prophets. Pastor John guides them back to the fundamental spiritual truth of every believer who is in the church universal: Your sins are forgiven because of Jesus' name. Do you believe this for yourself?

Times of crisis and struggle can lead to greater spiritual growth when the fundamentals of God's truth are brought into focus. I had a Bible teacher tell me to speak the gospel to myself everyday to affirm my place in God's family. We all are in need of the Father's forgiveness and love.

"What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"
(Robert Lowry) Father, we praise You for Your love and forgiveness of our sin. Thank You for the spiritual life we have through the name of Your precious son, Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

What is your greatest need? How does sin affect your spiritual growth?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for Anna and Brian's involvement with YWAM's School of Sustainable Development, whose goal is to bring help to materially poor people in rural areas in developing countries.

WEDNESDAY

1 John 2:13

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life.”
—Jesus (John 5:39-40)

Remember John is writing to his church in the midst of a crisis that is tearing the congregation apart. Here he writes: *“To you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning”* (v. 13). New Testament scholar Gary Burge writes: “[John] suggests that those who are mature in the faith, whose spiritual maturity and experience reach back many years, have a knowledge of God that is anchored securely in the things of the past. It is their seasoned wisdom that makes for steadfast faith in the present circumstances.”

Bible study does not give any one automatic spiritual growth and maturity. You could memorize the entire Bible and be able to discuss minute issues of biblical scholarship and yet fail to experience the truths found in its pages. It is a subtle temptation to prefer the Book to the Author. A book will not confront you about your sin; the Author will. Books can be ignored; it is much harder to avoid the Author when He is seeking a relationship with you.

The Pharisees in Jesus’ day thought God would be pleased with their knowledge of sacred Scripture. As was custom in their day,

they memorized whole books of Scripture and loved to recite them in a synagogue for hours. Yet, Jesus condemns them that although they knew Scripture, they did not know God. They were prideful of their Bible knowledge, but they rejected the invitation to know God's Son.

Spiritual "fathers" are essential in the church today as mentors to new and young believers in the faith. In response to our rapidly changing culture, we need both elders and youth to have a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ and each other to foster stable spiritual growth.

We thank You, Father, for those in our church who anchor our faith securely in the truths of the Bible. We pray for the pastoral team and staff as they faithfully lead and serve You. May we be challenged to have a mentoring relationship with someone this year.

QUESTIONS

How would you describe your relationship with Jesus Christ?
How would you rate your spiritual maturity? What steps will you take to bridge spiritual gaps in our church?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for Bible distribution in Costa Rica, for open doors to share Jesus and the Word of God.

THURSDAY

1 John 2:14

“I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”
—John (1 John 2:14b)

The next category of spiritual growth addresses the young men and women in the faith. What is the characteristic of a spiritual young person? It is not his/her age. It will be those who know the Word of God and have the Word of God living in them. They know what the Bible teaches and are equipped with spiritual knowledge. One characteristic of little children is ignorance; the characteristic of young men/women is knowledge. They know doctrine. A baby is self-absorbed with new feelings, needs, and problems; everything is personal. A young person in the faith has outgrown that and looks to the world outside and to the truth for direction.

John describes the spiritual growth of a young person to include strength because the Word of God lives in him/her, and it leads to the ability to overcome the evil one. Satan’s realm of operation is deception and false teaching. The community that John is writing to is in the midst of serious attacks by false teachers and prophets. You will know you are a “spiritually young man/woman” when cults don’t attract you, when false doctrine doesn’t lure you, and when you’re not easily deceived.

When Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus about the battle, he said, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 6:10-12). God equips spiritually trained believers to take on spiritual enemies. A few examples of the false teachings about Jesus include questioning His authority and that of the Bible, legalism, the health and wealth gospel, hell’s existence, and speaking in tongues.

I believe that a healthy church will have a balance of growing spiritually devoted believers at every stage who willingly reach out to serve the lost. What steps will you take to support the growth of believers in our church? What part will you play in outreach?

QUESTIONS

What is the hardest part of reading and studying the Bible?
How much time do you spend a day or in a week in God’s Word?
How would you describe your spiritual development?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for Kids’ Club, that Anna and Brian may teach children and families God’s truth and grace.

FRIDAY

1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:24

At the store, a father gave his son a box and said, “Son, you can have anything you want, but you can have only one thing. Make a good choice.” In a sense, God gives all of His children the same opportunity with their hearts. In this world, there are a million voices competing for our attention and our affection, but only one can be on the throne of our heart.

John writes very intense words concerning the state of our hearts here saying: *“Do not love the world or anything in the world ... [or] the love of the Father is not in him”* (1 John 2:15). Jesus addresses the same issue of our hearts saying: *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money”* (Matthew 6:24). The opportunity for spiritual growth will predictably follow who or what is the king of your heart.

All the things of the world that John lists as lusts (v. 16) should make you think back to Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:6) and to the testing of Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). I recommend going back to the results of each of these stories. The evil one promises pleasure, thrills, power and status, or the relief from pain. We hear voices whispering or shouting these promises all the time. Conversations at work or school, ads on TV or social media, chats with friends, and all other forms of communication promise to

fulfill our dreams. God has made it abundantly clear He loves us and wants us to choose Him. He has made this choice possible through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, on the cross. But the choice is ours to make.

But we can only choose one thing to put in our box. What are you putting in your box?

Jesus spoke these poignant words in John 10:27-28 saying: *“My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”* God, you have promised eternal life to those who listen to You and follow You. Help us to grow while we listen to Your voice speaking truth through Your Word and Your people.

QUESTIONS

Identify some of the competing voices and their promises in your life? What have you had in your box in the past year or so? What are you putting in your box now?

PRAYERS FOR ANNA AND BRIAN KLEINSASSER

Pray for the upcoming Discipleship Training School. This three-month lecture phase and two-month outreach is designed to train up YWAM missionaries and reach people with the Gospel.

Sources

- Robert Lowry's Hymn, "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus," written in 1876.
- Gary Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary: The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

