



new life

news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF NEW LIFE CHURCH OF CHRIST

DECEMBER 2016

Steve Says...

. . . that I really enjoyed going through The Story this year in our worship services. It was a great thing to read through the Word of God (at least selected passages from it) and walk through the plan of God from beginning to end. Some of us experienced the full spectrum of the scriptures for the very first time!

In the month of December we are going to be looking deeper into the mission of Jesus as we prepare for the Christmas celebration. Our theme for Christmas this year is **The Light Shines in the Darkness**. Of course with Christmas being on Sunday we are looking forward to a special time of worship together on that day. (You will find details about our Christmas services elsewhere in this newsletter.)

The focus on baby Jesus will serve as the starting point for a trip through his life. We will be using the gospel of Mark through the first quarter of the year to guide us through the life and ministry of Jesus and ask ourselves exactly who he is and how we are responding to him in our lives.

In a conversation that I had with Dave Rogers the other day, he reminded me how we are meant to fall in love with Jesus during this life. In order to do that, we need to spend time with him through the Word. My prayer is that with the background of the overall plan of God from The Story, we will now fall in love with Jesus through spending time in his life story as told through Mark's gospel.

A Line from Liming

I grew up in a home that did not know Jesus. Having a wonderful mom and dad was tops, but they did not know my Lord. So, of course I didn't know him either.

I had two men who worked with me who were Christians and they kept on my back about going to church. I finally decided to go one Sunday evening and of course, they were not there.

When I got to church, the preacher Ellis Wesner and his wife Vonda were at the door greeting everyone. The preacher had an old black suit, a string tie, a black derby and a false nose and mustache, Vonda had on a pioneer dress and a cute bonnet. I thought what a bunch of nuts these people are but, when the service started, Ellis preached a very good sermon. I was really moved. After a couple of weeks of worship, I asked Ellis to come to my house and talk to me about becoming a Christian. He did and in a couple of weeks I was baptized into Jesus. What a thrill to be saved.

Ever since then I have been in love with Jesus and Jesus is in love with me. He keeps me moving toward the work here and a home for eternity in Heaven.

A Happy Christian
Steve

Jason's Jams

Falling in Love with Jesus

My love for Jesus first began as a child growing up hearing all the wonderful stories he had done and about him dying for me. My love for Jesus grows deeper daily. It grew the day I married my wife. It grew the day my son was born and continued to grow with the birth of my other two sons. It grew the day of my stroke, as he is the one constant in this life. My love for Jesus is the driver of this life, all other relationships flow from that relationship. He is part of every corner of my life so I will continue to seek him and grow my relationship with him.

December Events

- **December 4**
Sonshine Singers
Performance
- **December 5**
Upward practice begins
- **December 14**
Community Dinner 5:00pm
- **December 24**
Christmas Eve Service
6:00pm
- **Christmas Service 10:00am**
Fellowship Breakfast 9:30am

December Birthdays

- 1 – Amy Beveridge
- 2 – Dave Shaffer
- 6 – Dianne Kehl, Darryl Jones,
Bruce Snyder
- 10 – Eli Sharp
- 11 – Bryan Dawson, Jeff Shaffer
- 12 – Bill Bushong
- 15 – Jeremy Brown
- 18 – Renee Sharp
- 23 – Hope Thompson
- 25 – Julie Clark,
- 26 – Jacob Kindt
- 27 – Dane Noe
- 28 – Carolyn Awwiller, Nola Starling
- 29 – Jackson Noe
- 30 – Jim Rockwell
- 31 – Jeff Dixon, Cyd McCready,
Janet Ocheltree, Lorri Richards

It is hard to pin down a specific occasion when “I” came to faith in Jesus Christ. My commitment to Him & my love for him are a product of years of growth & processes that are still developing. There are some events that stand out to me as being specific moments of clarity where I remember distinctly undergoing some level of “epiphany”, realizing more deeply who Jesus is & how worthy He is of my devotion. But to work through each of these events & the specific impact that they have had on my spiritual growth would take more time & space than a newsletter article allows, so I have decided to take the approach of identifying the attributes of Jesus Christ that I have gradually come to understand & how they have impacted my relationship with Him.

I was blessed enough to grow up in a Christian home. I was exposed to the faith from birth & participated in church life & have been taught about Jesus for as long as I can remember. Early on I remember developing a fear of God. There was something unsettling about the fact that He could see all I did & knew everything I thought. I could maybe get out of trouble with my parents by playing their limited sight & knowledge against them, but that would never work with God. He was always watching & knew if I lied or tried to hide anything from Him. There was also the fact that everyone would have to stand in front of Jesus someday & explain why they did what they did or didn’t do certain things in their life. I think this realization was important. It was a very distorted view of Jesus, but for a child it was healthy to know that no matter what happened I would always be accountable to at least one person

The motivation from fear of Hell has driven many people to the acceptance of Jesus. And, in the beginning, as far as it goes, there is nothing wrong with this. Interestingly, a careful reading of the Gospels show that Jesus warned against Hell a lot more than He motivated toward Heaven, probably because He knows that this sobering fact is the fastest path to a prideful man’s heart. And it was this fear of God that motivated me to come forward one Sunday & accept God’s grace & to be baptized into Christ. But fear, although a strong motivator for the immature, is not where we are meant to stay. It wasn’t until I was in college that the concept of exactly how much Christ gave for my sake. I began viewing Him through a different perspective. In spending large amounts of time in Paul’s letters, I began to gain insight into the fact that what Christ did was optional. I had never thought of that before, at least not in detail. The fact that the Father desired our salvation & chose to send Christ for our sake, & that the Son chose to empty Himself & become man to save me began to have a tremendous impact on me. The possibility had existed for Him to choose to do otherwise. But, motivated by love for us, who bear His image, He became the servant of all to bring us back into fellowship with Him. By the end of my college years, I finally grasped fully the idea of Jesus as the “sacrificial God” who was willing to suffer for the sake of those He created.

Another illuminating fact that occurred to me in my later college years came from spending time in John’s Gospel & first letter. John’s writings gave me a greater understanding & appreciation of Divine Love. It is God’s love that motivated him to choose to save us. It is Jesus’ love for the Father & for us that motivated his obedience to death on the cross. In seeing Jesus speak so often of love in John’s gospel, & then pairing all this teaching with his actions, I began to see what love was versus what it was not. I had, at least in some sense, a flawed view of love. This flawed view was the result of the culture I grew up in, not anything I was taught. It crept in without me knowing it & had persuaded me that love reigned in the realm of emotion & sentimentality. Now, while there may be an element of these things that are experienced in love (especially in romantic love), this is not what John meant when he describes love in writings or what Jesus meant when he talked about love. Love is rooting in sacrifice. It is seeking the greatest good for the object of our love, at the expense of our very self. God loved the world, so He put on flesh & dwelled among us & suffered, bled, & died, becoming a curse so that we could have the ultimate good of a life joined with his. Jesus was the embodiment of this self-sacrificing love. And then, John reminded me that “we love because He first loved us”. It is God’s love toward us that motivates & enables us to love others.

Most recently the Lord has been teaching me the scope of his redemptive work. He saves us, not to leave us as we were with a free pass to Heaven, but to allow us to “walk in the newness of life”. We are being “conformed to the image of Christ” & are called to “participate in the divine nature.” Our salvation is meant to accomplish the regeneration of everything that sin degenerated. God’s image is repaired & healed so that it shines through us. His plan for us is an “eternal weight of glory” that our sin-struck lives are too feeble to carry right now, so he works in us to prepare us for the reception of the gift. Sometimes I believe I had viewed God’s grace as a patch that covered over the wounds of sin. Now he has taught me that that doesn’t go far enough. He is interested in healing the wounds. It is too simple to view God as the Judge who pardons us because of what Jesus did. This is very true, but he is also the doctor who heals us of all our brokenness. He became a man to do for us what we could never do for ourselves & to give us what we could never get ourselves. He loves us too much to leave us as we are. He helps us to grow as a loving father does his children.

My love for Jesus has been motivated by many things throughout my life. I have loved him because of what he saved me from. I love him because he chose to suffer for me. I have loved him because of what he does for me & those I love. I love him because in every place I fail, He has overcome. John records Jesus as saying: “For the Father loves the Son & shows him everything he is doing, & He will show Him greater works than these so that you will be amazed.” Jesus shows us the heart of the Father. I love Jesus because the more I know him, the greater I see His works to be & I never cease to be amazed.

~Kyle~

Ryan's Writings

As a child, were you afraid of the dark? Some never outgrow their fear of the dark and honestly most of us probably have some fear of what lies in the shadows. In his book entitled "Running On Empty," Arron Chambers shares a story about one Saturday morning as a child, when he awoke before the sun came up. He was thirsty and needed a drink of water, but as he climbed out of bed he saw the most hideous creature, hulking to gargantuan proportions just beyond his bedroom door. The monster's shadow lurked out in the hallway. He couldn't yell because the monster would surely hear him and come devour him. So he lay in bed, clinching the covers over his head. In the morning he discovered that the creature had died. As his fear faded he realized that the hideous creature of the night was only the moonlit shadow of a plant outside his window. Just like Chamber's monster, many of our fears of the dark are dispelled by the light.

For our Holiday Gatherings this year we want to focus on Jesus Christ as the Light of Christmas. **Our Christmas Eve Gathering (Saturday, December 24th) will begin at 6:00p.** Join us for an evening of carols, candles, and commentary as we celebrate the Light of the World coming into our darkness. We continue **our celebration on Sunday (December 25th) with a time of fellowship at 9:30a** including a continental breakfast and the opportunity to pick up your Christmas Cards from our exchange. **Join us for one combined worship gathering at 10:00a** as we are encouraged to take the Light of Life, Jesus Christ, into the world.

God's first spoken words were "Let there be light." He doesn't like the dark anymore than we do. God knows that light is essential for both our physical and spiritual lives. Just as we need light to live in this world, we need the "Light of the World" to live life abundantly. Yet, some are comfortable in the dark spiritually speaking because darkness hides sin. God sent Jesus to the world so that the sin that lurks in the shadows of our hearts and minds would fade away in the Light of His Son.

Chambers summarizes our need for the Light of Life in this way. "If you are living in a world of darkness, then you are living in a world of death. If you want to live an abundant life, then you must be committed to live in the light. Leave the dark thinking behind. Leave the dark living behind. In the dark you can't see. In the dark you can get hurt. In the dark you will deteriorate. In the dark you will die. God created us for light, and he sent the Light to create life for us in this life and in the next, so 'Let there be light!'" **This Christmas the Light Shines in the Darkness.** Invite your family, neighbors and friends to join us for Christmas Eve and our Christmas Worship Gathering.

January Upcoming Events

Saturday January 7
Upward Game

Saturday January 14
Upward Game

Saturday January 21
Upward Game

Saturday January 28
Upward Game