



new life news

March 2017/ Monthly Newsletter of New Life Church of Christ

Steve Says...

I Don't Bounce Anymore! (and other observations on turning 50)

I turned 50 a couple of weeks back. It turns out that my 50th birthday was just another day. I didn't go crazy, quit my regular life, buy a red convertible sports car, abandon my family, and move to Southern California. In spite of all the cliché's about a midlife crisis, most people don't do those things.

What I have been doing is thinking about how my life and perspective on life has been changing. On the physical side of things I am noticing that I just don't recover from things the way I used to. I tell my kids, "I don't bounce anymore." What I mean is that I am way more careful about not falling (or wrecking my bike). I take less physical risks and when I do something physical, I don't bounce back nearly as quickly as I used to. It isn't that I have stopped doing things or become an observer, just that I am more careful and measured about what I do and I know there will be a price to pay in sore muscles and stiff joints for things that I love to do.

I guess that is all just a natural process of getting physically older. What is far more interesting to me is the mental side of life and what is happening there. Three things have really grabbed me in the last six months. I preach somewhere around 40 sermons a year and each one has some call or action point as a part of it. What you probably don't know is that in studying for each one, God talks to me about my personal interaction with that principal and how well I am responded to God's call.

Some of these themes hit me strongly. I am sure that you experience the same. Not every sermon moves you, but some do. Those are the ones that the Holy Spirit grabs ahold of and says to us that we need to really work on this in our lives. Well the three things that have really been speaking to my soul are; being thankful, denying self, and sharing the gospel.

As I get older, I like to think that I am gaining a little more perspective on life. And what I am seeing is how much God blesses me and how many of His blessings I take for granted, to the point of sometimes not even noting them as blessings! I am embarrassed at the skimpiness of my gratitude. So now, I am trying -not always successfully, but trying- to be like the one leper who returned to thank Jesus.

Have you ever noticed this little tendency as you get older to grant yourself little perks? I never would have done this (whatever it is) at 20 or 30, but now I will pay someone rather than do it myself. Or have another, Or stay a little longer, Or . . . And pretty soon, I am thinking I deserve these little things because, well, I just do. But I am seeing that in granting myself these things, I am putting space between myself and Jesus. He called me to deny myself, take up my cross, and follow Him. Most of my perks not only indulge myself rather than deny myself, but they are the opposite of taking up my cross. And so little by little I distance myself from Him. So now I am trying -not always successfully, but trying- to deny myself first in the little perks, but also in the bigger things.

I have been thinking about our country and the way it is going. I am thinking about how I can help. Being a nice guy doesn't really cut it anymore. Our world needs hope. They need purpose. They need Jesus. And so I am trying to share the gospel. This means getting to know people. I chose my neighbors. It isn't easy. I feel uncomfortable, but they need Jesus. So I am going to get to know them. I am going to show them Jesus in my life, and I am telling them about Jesus and the hope and salvation he brings. This is, after all, what Jesus himself tells each of us to do.

So I am trying. I pray you are to.

Nomads, Prodigals, and Exiles

I have a passion for working with young people. They have so much life in them and they are generally enthusiastic about living life to the fullest. Their life is even more abundant when they live for Christ and their faith plays a major role in that. Many young people grow up in the church and have been taught how God interacts with them through scripture, prayer, and mentorship. For some, however, the tweens, teens, and twenties are a time when their faith and life potentially become disconnected. One reason for this disconnect is the culture in which we live, but an even more alarming reason is a lack of real discipleship during these formative years.

A friend of mine recently shared an interesting observation about two of his children. He said that one of his children had solid connections with people within their church during their teens, while his other child had some connection with church people but the relationships were not all that deep. My friend pointed out that the level of connection they have with the church now is reflective of the relationships they had with church people during their teen years.

I am currently working with a young man to bridge the disconnect between his life and faith. In regards to his faith he told me that he feels *fake*. He grew up in the church, but his lifestyle does not match what he was taught to believe. I am pleased that he is still struggling through this process with me because many young people see the disconnect between beliefs and lifestyle and choose to disregard their faith for what they *believe* to be real life.

In David Kinnaman's book entitled *You Lost Me*, Kinnaman points out three ways in which young people are leaving the church. The first group he calls **nomads**. These are the young people who walk away from church engagement but still consider themselves Christians. Second are the **prodigals** who lose their faith, describing themselves as "no longer Christian." Finally are the group of **exiles** who are still invested in their Christian faith but feel stuck between culture and the church. Kinnaman points out a couple of key reminders regarding these groupings. First is that it is difficult to place the faith journeys of young people into cookie-cutter groups without recognizing that each person's story is unique to them and their situation. Second, is that most young people are not rejecting Christianity all together, but they are seeking non-conventional forms of Christian community. In other words most young Christians are struggling less with their faith in Christ than with their experience of church.

Let us take a moment to reflect on Kinnaman's thoughts while replacing the focus on young Christians with all Christian believers. Perhaps you know some individuals who have been church-goers for a while but they seem to be disconnected. Perhaps they are nomadic and believe that their personal faith has little to do with church engagement. Or maybe they are prodigals who have stopped running the race and left the church and left their faith behind. It could be that they are exiles being pulled in so many directions that church and faith are only a small part of their hectic lives. Wherever they are in their journey we must form meaningful relationships with them that draw them closer to Christ. We must disciple them and help them to think about how they view the

world through the lens of God's Truth. We must also teach them to value godly wisdom in life over just simple knowledge.

As we seek God's wisdom in clarifying our mission as the Church and our vision for accomplishing that mission, let us prayerfully consider the importance and urgency of keeping our life and faith connected at all times. Whether it is the hearts of young Christians or old, I pray that we will do all that we can to guard against losing any more members from the body of Christ. May we actively seek to disciple others and ourselves be discipled.



In His Service
Ryan

Jason's Jam

Keeping up With the Kingdom Kids

Last month I wrote about a new Curriculum the kids will be starting called Bible Skills, Drills and Thrills. This has been going great. The kids are participating in various activities that help them learn different verses as well as the books of law and history. They have also learned where a few important passages, including the Ten Commandments and songs of Psalms, are located in the bible. It has been such a joy to see them learn how to use the most important tool in their lives and I look forward to the rest of the year of learning. I continue to ask for prayers that their hearts will be open to letting God's Word in and they will fall in Love with him.

March Birthdays

- 1 – Brennan South
- 2 – Olivia Dudgeon, Bryce Fletcher
- 3 – Ashley Twedt
- 5 – Christopher Mann, Kyle Thompson, Ava Williams
- 6 – Laurie Fox
- 7 – Marjorie Snelson
- 9 – Obed Snelson
- 10 – Bonnie Fry
- 14 – Deborah Cromer
- 15 – Brittany Dudgeon, Ron Landis
- 16 – Emily Broughton
- 18 – Lori Walker
- 19 – Marsha Frontz, Jonah Beveridge
- 20 – Myles Sharp
- 21 – Abigail Hickerson
- 22 – Betty Lou Woodward
- 24 – Ryan Mowry
- 25 – Emily Hart
- 26 – Cayden Sharp
- 27 – Michelle Sharp
- 28 – Jessica Dawson
- 29 – Clint Shaffer, Donna Shank
- 30 – Andrew Kistler
- 31 – Luke Roseberry

Kyle's Korner

"I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord"
-Psalm 122:1

The attitude in which we do things matters just as much as the actions themselves. It is good to do the right thing, but if it is done grudgingly and with sourness it loses its quality. In our lives, it is good to constantly evaluate not only what we do, but why we do what we do. Also, the spirit in which we do things goes a long way as to whether or not it is actually worth doing.

The psalmist rejoiced with those who were on their way to worship the Lord. His spirit was focused on reflecting glory and adoration to his God, and that excitement shows through in his words. When we are preparing to worship do we communicate the same urgency and joy as the psalm-writer does? As our children are getting dressed on Sunday mornings, climb into the car and ride to church, what attitudes are we prompting in their hearts? Do they get the impression that we are rushing to just get another "thing" that we have to do because we are supposed to? Is a heavy feeling of duty communicated? Or, is there a joyful anticipation to be with the Lord's people, to meet around His table and to receive His wisdom through His word? Our attitudes are contagious. If we want our children to be excited about the Lord we need to make sure our hearts are reaching for Him first.

Let's all make sure that when the alarm goes off on any given morning we commit the day to the Lord and remember that "this is the day that the Lord has made. "Let us rejoice and be glad in it"

Upcoming Events

March 8

**Comfort & Joy Sewing Ministry

9:00am – 12:00pm

**Beveridge Discussion Group

7:00pm

** Youth Girls Bible Study

7:00pm

March 12, 19, 26

**Sonshine Singers Practice

4:00pm

March 14

**Sisters in Service Meeting

March 15

**Comfort & Joy Sewing

5:30pm-8:30pm

**Women's Bible Study

7:00pm

March 22

**Beveridge Discussion Group

7:00pm

** Youth Girls Bible Study

7:00pm

