



new life *news*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF NEW LIFE CHURCH OF CHRIST

APRIL 2018

Steve Says . . .

. . . that recently I heard a teaching that I wanted to share with you. It was about confession and forgiveness. Before that a quick story. One time when I was young, my mother drove her car out into the middle of a field where it got stuck. What a crazy thing. How could anyone get clear off the road and into the middle of a field? Please understand that it was in the middle of a snowstorm and the conditions were near total whiteout. Visibility was so low that there was nothing to use as a marker to check and make sure that you were still on the road. You couldn't see road signs or telephone poles or even piles of snow marking the edge of the road. What my Mom did in that situation was to just follow the car in front of her and hope that they had a better feel for the position of the road than she did. It turns out they didn't and so both cars got stuck in a field. In fact there was a whole line of cars who all followed one another into the field. The blind leading the blind-almost literally!

Ok now the teaching I heard. The teacher said that he thinks that we too often mix up confession with forgiveness, meaning that we think once we confess that the work of forgiveness is over. We think of confessing as the solution, as a conclusion to the problem. It isn't. He used the analogy of a road. Confession is admitting that you have gone off the road. Sometimes this is not immediately obvious. We think we are following the path of God, when in reality we have gotten off the path. We get caught following someone else (like my Mom) instead of relying on the scripture and the Holy Spirit. It can be a hard thing for us to do, to admit that we are off the road—and that is the value of confession. Acknowledging the problem. But it is a starting point—rather than an ending point.

April Church Events

- April 4 – Comfort & Joy Sewing Ministry 9:00am
- April 7,14,21,28 Sonshine Singers Practice 10:00am
- April 8 &15 – Sonshine Singers practice 4:00pm
- April 11 – Sr. Moments Event 11:00am
- April 18 – Comfort & Joy Sewing Ministry 5:30pm
- April 22– Sonshine Singers Practice 12:00pm
- April 29 – Sonshine Singers Practice 3:00pm

The true work of repentance comes in trying to answer three questions: 1) How did I get off the road? (How did I get away from living the life God wants me to live? 2) How do I get back on the road? (What changes do I need to make in my life so that I am living the life God wants me to live?) 3) How do I make sure I don't get off the road again? (What do I need to ensure that I do not repeatedly follow the same mistake/sin over and over again?) It is the hard work of answering these questions in a meaningful way that God uses to bring about true and lasting change in us.

Before starting to work on those three questions, there are some truths you need to know. Truth 1) God loves you. Over and over we are assured of this. The Psalms point out to us repeatedly that God is our refuge, God is our shelter, God is our shield, God is our Rock, God is our help and so on. He loves you and will not abandon you just because you have strayed from His path. It isn't a matter of how great my sin is, as though there were a point where my sin is greater than God's ability to love. Instead, it is a matter of how great God's love is. Psalm 63:3 tells us that God's love is greater than life itself. He loves you with that kind of love.

Truth 2) Jesus has already forgiven you for whatever you may have done. People hold grudges and try to get revenge, but not God. He has already forgiven you and His concern is to bring healing and growth into your life. God already had every opportunity to condemn us, but He chose instead to send Jesus to save us. (John 3:16-17) If this is how he treated us when we were his enemies how much more will he work in us now that we are his children? (see Rom 5:6-11).

Truth 3) God's power is made perfect in our weakness. The devotional book I am reading is called, "Jesus Calling" and in the devotion for today (which is written as though it were Jesus speaking) had this statement in it. "Human weakness consecrated to me (Jesus) is like a magnet, drawing My Power into your neediness." We are ever needy in the presence of God, and never more so than at times of repentance. But we must seek His Power not our own. That means time in prayer, in the scripture, listening to the Holy Spirit, and seeking him from the depths of our soul, when we have grappled with these truths in our brokenness and confession. Then God is ready to walk us through the three questions of repentance. And on the other side of that we find hope and joy.

"Consider it pure joy my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds. Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything."
James 1:2-4

Jason's Jam

Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

It's hard to write about spring when there is three inches of fresh snow on the ground, but I will give it a try.

Spring, a time for growth, color, rain, warmth (please). It can be all those things in our lives as well. Some of us feel like we are stuck in the winter season of life, but we have spring to look forward to.

We have the ability to ask the creator of the universe to renew us, to light the fire in us, to show his strength where we are weak.

Spring will be here, the wait can be frustrating, and painful, but it will come and we have God who always keeps his promises and will renew us daily.

Trust in Him, talk with Him all the time, praise Him in every moment, allow Him to provide the warm rain in your life that can wash away the pain we face in this life.

Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory.

-2Corinthians 4:16-17

I never paid much attention to spring before I moved to Ohio. I had never really been through many actual “winters” where there was cold, wind, snow and darkness for several months out of the year. But now I can’t wait for spring to come. I hate snow. I really hate cold. And darkness is depressing. Spring becomes a more and more welcome season every year.

Apart from the encouragement from impending warmer weather, there is also an unfolding beauty that comes from spring. Warm days punch through the cold occasionally, but as time progresses the warmth stays more consistently and the cold slowly fades into a bad memory.

One day a few sprouts and buds and some early birds chirping. A few days later full blooms on some flowers. A few weeks later and there are green trees, flowers in full bloom, bunnies, birds and bees all over. Seeds can be sown because the world around is now receptive to life. A total transformation has come. It was slow and came in fits and starts. But it came!

When we came to the Lord we were dead and cold, laying lifelessly in our sins. But Christ’s Word called out, “Wake up sleeper, Rise from the dead!” (Ephesians 5:14). Then He began to shine on us. This began a process of our *being renewed day by day*. He works in us to become more heavenly, more like Himself. He is turning our dark, bitter winter into warmth and light, causing us to be receptive of life. It is a process, with more of Him shining through us in fits and starts, a little more after a few days, more after a few years, then on until we move into to the full summer of life, and take hold of the *incomparable weight of glory* He prepares for us in Heaven.

Spring Blessings!

-Kyle

April Birthdays

- 1 – Larry Ramey
- 2 – Bryan Clark, Karen Mascazzini
- 5 – Joshua Dixon, Barbara Kindt
- 8 – Phyllis Fry, Cindy Golden
- 9 – Jim Mowry
- 11 – James Hawkins, Carol Walker
- 12 – Larry Mowry, Gerald Schmacher, Linda Schumacher
- 14 – Anita Hawkins
- 18 – LillyAnn Dawson
- 21 – Emma Hatfield
- 22 – Zain Brown, Ryan South,
- 23 – Shirley Bahr
- 24 – Linda Ellis, Mary Kempton, Jared Starling
- 26 – Alex Culler, Sam Dixon, Betty Hamilton, Jacob Smith
- 27 – Laura Dearth
- 28 – Julie Brown, Jamie Mascazzini
- 29 – Sherri Benick, Ron Ernsberger, Sheila South

Upcoming May Events

- May 2 – Comfort & Joy Sewing @ 9:00a
- May 6 – Sonshine Singers Performance @ 6:00p
- May 16 – Senior Moments Event
- May 16 – Comfort & Joy Sewing @ 5:30p

S.P.R.I.N.G.

It is exciting to think about spring and the new life in creation that will soon be revealed by the sun and warmer temperatures. Spring is also the time that we throw open the windows, fill our homes with fresh air, and begin cleaning up from a long winter. In many ways, the spring season is a good opportunity to start anew, clear the clutter, and prepare for life ahead. So it is with worship. Perhaps your heart, mind, and soul are closed and dormant. Or maybe the business of life has kept you from the important things. Let me encourage us all to think S.P.R.I.N.G. as we consider what it means to be true worshipers of God.

Surrender

Worship begins with humility. Only when we completely surrender to God can we truly recognize the value and worth He deserves. As we surrender our lives to His will we better understand our position before the throne of God. We bow in humility, reverence, and awe with thanksgiving. God does not demand our worship, instead, He offers us a relationship beyond expectation if we will truly surrender all to Him.

Priority

We worship in the presence of God. This probably comes as no surprise because God is *always present*, but we must not confuse proximity with God and the presence of God. When we worship, God is with us in space and time and He is also in us through the Holy Spirit. But when we confuse singing a few songs together on a Sunday morning with daily living in the presence of God, worship just becomes something we do. Authentic worship is constantly spending time in God's presence each and every day. We must make worship the priority in our lives for if we are not desperate for God, then we will be satisfied with ourselves. Make His Word, prayer, and Christian fellowship of utmost importance.

Respect

True biblical worship is ultimately about God, but one of the most important ways we worship Him is by building up other members of the body of Christ. As a church we strive to blend our worship gatherings in such a way that everyone may bring glory to God. We all have our personal preferences, but we must respect one another so that we might be unified in our worship of God. This means that we must truly love one another as Christ loved us. We must seek the good of others allowing God to transform us all through worship rather than force conformity on others. We must also be fluent in the Gospel message of Christ whereby we seek to serve others in every possible way.

Intentional

No one can make you worship. Perhaps you could be forced to go through the motions of worship, but biblical worship is intentional. It is important that we come prepared to worship God. What do you bring to place before the throne of God? Maybe it is brokenness or praise. It could be a prayer of thanks or a lament of frustration. Whatever it is that you bring in worship it must be deliberate. We cannot expect others to worship for us. Worship is always a choice. Let us commit to helping one another make the best choice in worship.

Natural

Worship is natural. We all worship something and we never really cease to worship. We were created to worship, but even from the beginning we chose to worship unnaturally by substituting godly worship for something else, someone else. We must stay focused on who God is and what He has done for us. If we are not directing our worship toward God, we will simply make another god our target. Let us encourage one another to fight off unnatural worship by keeping God at the center.

Good

Worship is also essential. It is a good thing. Worship draws us closer to God and to one another. We learn more about God by encountering Him in worship. We grow in our faith as we praise God together with the body of Christ. Our worship also serves as a testimony to those outside the family of God. We all want good things in life and worshipping the Almighty God is not only good, it's the best.

I pray that we might spring into a new season of worship in our lives and as a church. It's time to take down the cobwebs, dust off our priorities, and enjoy proclaiming the greatness of God together as His people.

