

DRAWING

WHATEVER IT TAKES!

2017

WHEREVER IT TAKES US!

NEARER

Taking the Next Step Toward A Deeper Level of Spiritual Growth
and A Higher Quality of Christ-Like Character"

From the Pulpit Ministry of Christ E Free Church

January – February 2017

Jesus Christ
Our Highest Calling
Our Greatest Purpose
Our Soul's Source and Joy
And Our All-Consuming Passion

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INTRODUCTION

When left to ourselves, humans tend to drift. We tend to drift toward the things that our human nature craves, or longs for. That may be good or bad things. As humans, we tend to drift toward our own interests, desires and pursuits, whether they are good or bad, constructive or destructive. Our soul does, what our soul wants. Our life will pursue, that which our heart desires most.

In the process of drifting toward things we desire most, we are also drifting away from God. What God desires for us is often quite different than what we desire for ourselves.

We are all at different spiritual levels. Some are farther along and more mature than others of us. This series, “Drawing Nearer” is about taking the next steps, toward Drawing Nearer to God, regardless of how old in the faith we are, what positions in the church we may hold or how young and novice-like we may feel.

Drawing Nearer is an Invitation – not so much from the writer of this booklet but from God Himself. As you will see, God desires us to Draw Nearer to Him. The most wonderful promise of all is that HE will in turn, draw near to us (James 4:8).

Wherever we are, each of us can take the next step; advance to the next level of spiritual maturity, as together, we are Drawing Nearer.

If you are willing to say:

“Lord, Whatever it takes, and Wherever it takes me,
Draw Me Nearer!”, then God Himself, will meet you
where you are and will walk with you in this journey.
And when that occurs, your life will never be the same.

"DRAWING NEARER"

-- An Overview --

Theme: Drawing Nearer

January 1, 2017

Text:

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts,
you double-minded.” -- James 4:8 ESV

The closer you draw to another person, the greater the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships, and to experience hurtful troubles.

-- rp journey

DRAWING NEARER TO GOD through Deeper Intimacy

DRAWING NEARER TO THE CHURCH through Frequent Fellowship

DRAWING NEARER TO THE LOST through Passionate Outreach

DRAWING NEARER TO MY CALLING through Sacrificial Service

DRAWING NEARER means “Taking Next Steps toward A Deeper Level of Spiritual Maturity, while developing a Higher Quality of Christ-like Character.”

INTRODUCTION

Mat 11:28-30 ESV Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

How many of us hear those words of Jesus and don't think, "Boy, I sure would like to experience some of that!" How I'd love to know the kind of rest that Jesus offers."

In a world filled with stress – in families with turmoil – in relationships filled with strife and misunderstandings – unexpected physical afflictions - how pleasant and attractive that sounds to our ears. "I will give you rest." "You will find rest for your souls."

This past year, some of us have anticipated good things, yet have been blindsided by strife and conflict. Some have expected the best, but circumstances of life have proven to be more hardship than blessings. Along with strained relations, some have experienced medical instability and financial insecurity.

In all of life's unexpectedness and unpleasantness - Jesus invites us to come unto Him, and remain with him – and to learn from him. He invites us to allow His peace and gentleness to rub off on us, and to experience the peace and intimacy with our Heavenly Father, as Jesus Himself has. 2017 will certainly bring about new events and experiences in our lives. Amidst those experiences, will arise more challenges for personal growth and new opportunities to experience God's grace and faithfulness.

Some circumstances will prove to be out of our control and not of your own doing. Some will be a result of God's leading in spite of your own planning. Some circumstances will result from extended

prayer in seeking God and obedience to what you believe to be His will for you. Even then, you may still experience troubles.

Our Theme for this month and continuing through the new year will be **DRAWING NEARER**.

DRAW NEAR to God, and He will draw near to you....”

- James 4:8a

We may drift away from God, but when we begin to Draw Nearer to Him, He in turn moves to toward us – to meet us right where we are.

“**DRAWING NEARER**” is all about our relationship with God. Everything else in life – every other relationship flows out of that Top Relationship. Every area of your life will be affected or influenced by your relationship with God. And – if you want to look at it this way - it is in your best interest, that your relationship with God be in order and that we do all that is in our power, to make it all that it can be.

And wherever we are, at whatever level of faith, however spiritually mature or immature we may be, we can always take a step toward the next level of spiritual depth and intimacy with God. It is what we need and what He deserves.

“**DRAWING NEARER**” – is about purposefully taking action and intentionally doing what is within our own power, in taking the next steps toward Drawing Nearer to God. This will involve:

- ❖ Prayer and honest personal evaluation of my own spiritual life and depth.
- ❖ Some of our next steps will lead us toward greater obedience to Scriptural Truth.

- ❖ For some of us, **DRAWING NEARER** will involve taking steps of repentance, to break old habits, sinful practices or simply things that consistently distract us and rob us of our intimacy with God; things that steal our attention and captivate our affections.
- ❖ For all of us, hopefully, **DRAWING NEARER** will involve a continued nurturing of Godly desires and interests.

Wherever you are spiritually – **DRAWING NEARER** is about taking the next step toward “a deeper level of spiritual maturity, and developing a higher quality of Christ-like character”. Imagine for a moment, actually experiencing the *Rest* that Jesus offers to those who “learn of Him”.

GOAL #1: Drawing Nearer To God

It is important to realize that God, desires us to Draw Near to Him. “Come unto me...”(Mat.11:28). “Draw Near to God...”(James 4:8) "Come, everyone who thirsts..." (Is.55:1).

We are talking about...

Drawing Nearer through Deeper Intimacy with God

We must understand that God has already made the first move toward us.

The Love of God Draws us to Him.

1Jn 4:19 ESV We love because he first loved us.
--

We love God because He first loved us. God initiated the move toward deepening relations with His creation. His love provided a means whereby a sinful mankind could be reconciled to our holy God.

The Love and Mercies of God draw us to Him.

Rom 2:4 ESV Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

God treats us mercifully. He demonstrates His compassions toward us. He blesses us daily – mostly with blessings we are not even aware of. His mercies are new every morning.^[Lam.3:22] And His merciful treatment toward His creation, and His kindness expressed to us, are intended to – not merely demonstrate what kind of God He is – but those traits and His treatment to humans are intended to draw humans nearer to Him.

When was the last time God's mercies and kindness brought you to repentance from your sin? It should.

God Himself takes the initiative to draw us to Him.

Joh 6:44 ESV No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

* Are we aware of the fact that any one of us are in the kingdom of God, is because it was God's first intent to get us here? Are we aware that if God hadn't drawn us to His love – if the Holy Spirit hadn't convicted us of our sin, if the Son of God had not shed his blood for our sin payment – If God hadn't done all that and taken the first steps to Draw us Nearer to Him, we would not have done it on our own.

He took the initiative. **He** draws us to Himself. **He** convicts us of our sin so we will seek forgiveness and trust in His Son. This is focused on my own personal intimacy with God and my own spiritual development.

This also involves...

Drawing Nearer through Practical Holiness in living

This involves things in our lives which affect our intimacy with God. Drawing Nearer to God, means more of his holiness of Character will be manifested in my life. It means my life will begin changing me for the Good. The longer we walk with Christ, the more Christ-like we should become, not the other way around.

Personal holiness is a lifestyle that seeks to live in a manner that removes obstacles in our relationships with God.

Whatever it takes! Wherever it takes us!

Drawing Nearer to God - It is important to realize that God, desires us to Draw Near to Him.

GOAL #2: Drawing Nearer to the Church Family

Drawing Nearer to the Church family emphasizes the importance of the Church or the Body of Christ in our individual lives. This involves my Frequent Fellowship with the church family and **Connecting with other believers**. It is also the focus on my own personal interaction with other believers, in the church setting.

This is the community level of relational involvement with the church family; gathering and participating together in prayer, Sunday School and Bible studies; Evangelistic outreach; visiting and encouraging others, etc. The key word here is “gathering”. This means actually meeting together in the same place, at the same time, with face to face, interaction.

The Value of the Church Family Life

Families are not ideal and neither are church families. But just as biological families are intended to supply provisions, support,

encouragement, love, acceptance and guidance, so is the Church family. If you think that when you attend Sunday worship that you have experienced all the church life that God has for you, you are mistaken.

While worship together is a very important part of Church family life there is much much more. Church life may involve personal accountability, mutual encouragement and community Support.

“Church” can be a place of ...

Purifying of Self and Glorifying of God

Drawing Nearer to the Church family emphasizes the importance of the whole Church family, in the life of every individual believer. We need one another.

Even the challenging relationships you experience in Church is all part of God smoothing off our rough edges, and nurturing in you and me, a heart of kindness, patience and acceptance, much like the heart of Christ Himself. Instead of leaving a church due to problems, “Drawing Nearer” would view challenges as God purifying our character and nurturing our spiritual growth.

GOAL #3: Drawing Nearer to the Lost

We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and with all our strength. And we are to love our neighbor as ourselves”. ^[Mat.22 37-29] This involves a Greater *Passion* for the Lost and it involves purposefully **Connecting with my community**.

Drawing Nearer to the Lost must involve...

Cultivating a concern and urgency for those outside Gods family

If there is anything missing from “the church” today, it seems to be an *urgency* for the lost. This is the focus on my own personal outreach efforts to those outside God’s family.

This is each of us responding in personal obedience to the Great Commission and maturing to the level where I do not need continued instruction, reminding or persuading to do what I know God has called me to do. This means making the most of the spiritual opportunities and Kingdom moments God brings into my life, to share my faith and personally disciple others.

This would involve some things such as ¹Relational Connections, ²Soul winning and ³one on one Discipleship.

“Connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church.” –Christ E Free Mission

Determining my part in evangelistic outreach

I’m not sure what you grew up being told or modeled, but evangelistic outreach and sharing the gospel with others and making disciples of all people – is not the job of the pastor or one or two of the more energetic or gifted people in your church. It is for every one of us. Personal outreach demonstrates my own participation in the Great Commission, my fulfillment in the Great Commandment, as I love God and love others.

GOAL #4: Drawing Nearer to My Calling

This is in the area of sacrificial service and pursuing your own personal calling in Christ. (Eph.2:10)

This involves understanding God’s general plan for all believers

God has a purpose for my Christian life and service. (Eph.2:8-10)
Every person has a personal, individual, tailor fitted, and custom

made purpose through which God desires to use you for His eternal kingdom plan. This involves Sacrificial Service in some area of Church Ministry – **Connecting with my spiritual giftedness**. This may involve giving of my time, energy and resources.

This is focused on my Giving of myself first to the Lord and then serving in some area of ministry involvement for others. And involves volunteering regularly for areas of Christian service within the church family, activities and leadership opportunities. This is taking on responsibilities that are needed for the inner and outer workings of the church ministries and needs. These are things God expects of each and every believing Christian.

This also involves seeking God’s specific calling for me in Church service and Christian ministry

God’s plan for me and my interest, obedience and pursuit of that calling, includes how I give of my *self*, my time, my money and energy, in sacrificial service to Christ.

Eph 4:1-3 ESV I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the **calling** to which you have been **called**, (2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, (3) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“God’s Calling” is the willful plan of God, for the life of the believer, for the kingdom of God. It must be sought after and pursued with prayer and earnestness. It must be lived and experienced. We will focus on this further in the last chapter.

CONCLUSION / ASSIGNMENT:

Psa 73:28 MKJV And I, it is good for me to **DRAW NEAR** to God; I have put my trust in Jehovah God, to declare all Your works.

Heb 7:19 ESV (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we **DRAW NEAR** to God.

I'd like to think that every single person here toady, is genuinely interested in doing what it takes to take that next step toward Drawing Nearer to God, even though, it will most certainly cost us all something.

I ask each of you to take our bulletin insert and through this week, review it, think about these questions and allow this to be a sort of personal, spiritual inventory. Make this a matter of sincere prayer to God. Be prepared to follow through with whatever God may put on your heart.

2017: "DRAWING NEARER"

WHATEVER IT TAKES! WHEREVER IT TAKES US!

1) DRAWING NEARER TO GOD

My personal Intimacy with God.

- How satisfied am I with my spiritual maturity?
- What are my greatest areas of spiritual weakness that needs nurturing?
- Are there some steps that come to mind, that I could take toward developing a deeper intimacy with God? such as regular Bible reading; study a particular topic; meditating on Scripture; steps of repentance; or steps of implementing obedience?

2 DRAWING NEARER TO THE CHURCH

** My interaction with others in the church (body of Christ)*

- This is the community level of involvement with the church family; gathering and participating together in prayer, SS and Bible studies; Evangelistic outreach; visiting, encouraging others, etc.
- How often do I gather with other believers? When I am with other Christians, am I more concerned about what I am getting or how I might contribute to the growth and encouragement of those around me?

3) DRAWING NEARER TO THE LOST

* *My participation in reaching those outside God's family*

- This is my personal obedience to the Great Commission and maturing to the level where I do not need continued instruction, reminding or persuading to do what I believe God has called me to do.
- Who have I shared Christ with recently?

4) DRAWING NEARER TO MY CALLING

* *My Giving of self; Sacrificial Service in ministry involvement*

- This involves volunteering regularly for areas of Christian service within the church family, activities and leadership opportunities. This is taking on responsibilities that are needed for the inner and outer workings of the church ministries and needs.
- How involved am I in serving within my church family?

EXTRA:

- **False Drawing Near** - Isa 29:13
- **Instruction to Draw Near** - Heb 10:19-25; Jas 4:8



"DRAWING NEARER"

To God through Deeper Intimacy

Theme: Drawing Nearer

January 8 & 15, 2017

"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,
'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'
--John 7:38

Intimacy is something most people long for....
as long as it doesn't involve getting too close and revealing too much.
-anonymous

DRAWING NEARER TO GOD through Deeper Intimacy

DRAWING NEARER TO THE CHURCH through Frequent Fellowship

DRAWING NEARER TO THE LOST through Passionate Outreach

DRAWING NEARER TO MY CALLING through Sacrificial Service

DRAWING NEARER means "Taking Next Steps toward A
Deeper Level of Spiritual Maturity, developing a Higher Quality of
Christ-like Character."

INTRODUCTION

Drawing nearer through Intimacy with God.

Whatever it Takes!

Wherever It Takes Us!

So through personal assessment, we ask ourselves:

- How satisfied am I with my spiritual maturity and progress?
- What are my greatest areas of spiritual weakness that needs nurturing?
- Are there some steps that come to mind, that I could take toward developing a deeper intimacy with God? such as regular Bible reading; study a particular topic; meditating on Scripture; steps of repentance; or steps of implementing obedience?

One common mistake we often make is thinking that nearness to God can be achieved through knowledge accumulation. Now, of course to intimately know God we must know certain things about God. Jesus said, “you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32) and he pointed out that many worship what they do not know (John 4:22).

”Never in the history of the Christian church has so much theological knowledge been available to so many people as it is today. The American church enjoys perhaps the greatest amount of this abundance. We are awash in Bible translations, good books, insightful articles, recorded sermons, interviews, movies, documentaries, music, and more. And much of it very good. It is right for us to be very thankful. But America is *not* abounding in Enochs, that is, saints who walk with God in a profoundly intimate way.” (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5).

—J.Piper

So, what does God desire or expect from us?

Mic 6:8 ESV He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to ***walk humbly with your God?***

What can we do to walk more closely and to Draw Nearer to God? What is within our power to change in order that we, walk personally and intimately with God?

Imagine your life is a great fountain. There are several tiers to the fountain of your life. The water spews out the top and pours into the top tier. The water in the top tier, overflows into the lower tier. That tier then overflows into the lower tier.



Pro. 4:23 ESV Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Now understand this: I believe God Himself is to be the spring of life within us; the fountain that spews forth and overflows, out of our lives and into the lives of others. He is the fountain of living water that Jesus referred to in the gospel of John.

Joh 4:13-14 ESV Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Joh 7:37-38 ESV On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and

drink. (38) Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

God has to be our Source and fountain. He must be our Greatest Purpose, our Highest Calling, our Soul's Source and Joy and our All-Consuming Passion.

Our blessings of life, will be directly related to the level of intimacy in our relationship with God. He is our Source of life and help for this earthly life and for the life to come.

DRAWING NEARER THROUGH INTIMACY WITH GOD

It is important to realize that God, desires us to Draw Near to Him. "Come unto me...". "Draw Near to God..." Therefore, He has provided opportunities for us to effectively Draw Nearer to Him in intimacy.

We Can Draw Nearer to God through Personal, Relational Intimacy.

Isa 55:1-3 ESV "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (2) Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. (3) Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

In Is.55, God promises that if we are interested in deeper intimacy or if our soul unquenchably thirsts for what He alone can provide, He will quench our thirst. He will satisfy our spiritual needs and

longings. We need to remember: (1) that God has already made the first move toward us. God's love draws us to Him.(1Jn.4:19). (2) His goodness and patience and mercies are intended to draw us to Him in repentance.(Rom.2:4). I have an idea that if we took time – and sometimes that is the key – time; but if we took time to spend quietly with God, we would begin to experience an intimacy with Him which we would never want to be without, again.

God wants to be our Fountain of life – our Source. If we took time to consider the goodness of God in our lives; the mercies of God demonstrated to us in withholding the punishment that we as fallen humans deserve, our love for Him would surely grow. If we were mindfully aware of His long-Suffering patience towards us, over and over and over and over again – I can't help but think that as our minds are filled with God's treatment toward us, our hearts and will would be drawn to Him in a deeper, closer and more meaningful Relationship connection than we have previously experienced. And (3) we need to remember that God Himself, has chosen to draw us to Him.(Jn.6:44). We would not have the ability or interest to approach Him on our own.

Remember our Christianity is not merely a list of dos and don'ts. That is legalism. Our "religion" so to speak is first and foremost a relationship with God as our heavenly Father and we are His children.

Are we aware of the fact, that the reason any one of us are in the kingdom of God is because it was His first intent to get us here? Are we aware that if God hadn't drawn us to His love – if the Holy Spirit hadn't convicted us of our sin, if the Son of God had not shed his blood for our sin payment – If God hadn't done all that and taken the first steps to Draw us Nearer to Him, we would not have done it on our own. If God Himself did not initiate the

relationships, we would remain forever distanced and eternally disconnected from Him.

Instead, He invites us to come to Him and drink. **He** took the initiative. **He** draws us to Himself. **He** convicts us of our sin so we will seek forgiveness and trust in His Son.

And He promises that If we thirst for more of Him, He will satisfy that thirst. If we Draw Nearer to Him, He will in turn draw near to us. If we thirst for more intimacy in our relationship with Him, He will meet us and satisfy that desire for deeper relational intimacy.

“...Come to me; hear, that your soul may live;(v3); i.e. not only to “live” but the reference is toward being revived, and nourished; not merely existing but thriving. This is a promise for My own personal Intimacy with God and my own spiritual development. He offers the invitation, because He has taken the initiative to draw us.

This also involves...

Taking Next Steps toward keeping relational communion clear with God

False drawing near

Isa 29:13 ESV And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men

Commandments come from the outside. Desire comes from inside the heart. God desires, not merely words and lip service, but He desires to be **the** Desire of our heart and for our lifestyle practice to evidence that. We are invited to drink deeply and regularly from the Life fountain of God.

Joh 7:38 ESV Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

If Greater Intimacy with God is something you desire, then Greater intimacy with God, must be made, the most important priority in life. It can't be half-hearted. Because the devil will give you every excuse and bring about every distraction you can imagine. And unless you want that more than anything else, then everything else will take precedence over that goal. "Greater desires always supersede lesser desires."

You will not read a book or hear a sermon and suddenly find yourself experiencing greater intimacy with God. There is no switch to flip on. Relational depth and intimacy with God is a lengthy pursuit of which there are no short cuts. It is a pursuit which will cost you some things that are very dear to you. It is a life-long pursuit which will cost you things that are most precious to you.

Some people feel they just don't feel close to God or as close as they would like to feel to God. Their spiritual life lacks meaning, purpose, personal satisfaction or intimacy. Some feel that way and don't know what to do about it.

Intimacy with God does not necessarily involve God coming near to us. It involves us, Drawing Nearer to God. Intimacy and nearness to God is not about God doing a better job of loving you, but rather you doing a better job of loving God.

You "Come Unto Me"^[Mat.11:28] **You** "Draw Near to God"^[James 4:8]

Deu 30:19-20 ESV I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, (20)

loving the LORD your God, ***obeying*** his voice and ***holding fast*** to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

“loving” refers to having a definite and genuine desire for greater intimacy with God. ***“Obeying”*** is exactly that, a lifestyle practice of hearing and obeying His voice and instruction. ***“Hold fast”*** is the OT word that means to “cleave”. It is the same word, the HOLY Spirit used in Gen.2:24, “for this reason a man shall leave his mother and father and ***cleave*** to his wife...”

It refers to how you hold onto someone after having pursued and overtaken them and laid hold of them. Like the police chasing a criminal and catching them. It also describes how a drowning person might hold onto a life preserver. Holding fast implies holding onto something with desperate dependence, as though one’s life might depend on it.

A Life of Ease is not a life of Growth.

While we may be taking intentional steps forward, our progress may not be able to be measured in steps. It may at times, seem as though we are going backward rather than forward. Things often get worse, before they appear to get better. Hardship builds character. Present failure is often the foundation for future success.

Experiences of personal weakness, causes us to cleave to God that much more tightly and to walk that much more closely. It is not pleasant, but it is definitely part of growing and Drawing Nearer to God.

Whatever level you perceive your spiritual level to be, each of us can still take the next step toward Drawing Nearer to God. It must be a genuine desire and it must become our top priority. Greater

desires supersede lesser desires and our desires will determine our priorities. Then our priorities will determine the things we put forth effort to pursue.

DRAWING NEARER THROUGH PRACTICAL HOLINESS IN LIVING

Our intimacy with God is hindered by...

Bad habits, sinful practices and distracting influences

These are things to address in my Christian life. We must intentionally move toward removing bad elements from our lives. Taking steps toward intimacy with God, may mean taking steps to purge our lives of known bad behavior and lifestyle practices.

Heb 12:1 ESV Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

In order to Draw Nearer to God, we may need to decide what in our life needs to go? What needs to be removed? What needs to be put on the back burner? What things do you need to say “NO” to?

v.1) Weights and sins: Sins, hopefully we know what that means. Anything that breaks God’s law or violates His holiness by our attitudes, thoughts, words or actions. But weights are unnecessary hindrances to a person running a race. For our intimacy with God, these may be in the form of certain practices or influences that distract us from more focused attention on the greater goal of Drawing Nearer to God.

I have personally discovered that quite often, my relationship with God does not necessarily need something more or new, but to

remove certain things or put certain lesser things on hold. There have been times when I have had to step away from certain ministries, which were too all-consuming, in order to get refocused.

There may be things in our lives which affect our relationship with God. Like gophers in a garden that eat at, nibble on, slowly kill plants and destroy a garden. This may involve eliminating simple distractions that hold our interests captive. These may be subtle things that attract our attention and steal of affections. Things that draw us away from God.

Drawing Nearer to God, means more of his holiness of Character will be manifested in my life. It means my life will begin changing for the Good. The longer we walk with Christ, the more Christ-like we should become, not the other way around.

Personal holiness is a lifestyle that seeks to live in a manner that removes obstacles in our relationships with God, in experiencing greater intimacy with Him.

Are we willing to take the challenge of ...

Drawing Nearer to God!

Whatever it takes! Wherever it takes us!

Drawing Nearer to God - It is important to realize that God, desires us to Draw Near to Him. Maybe we need to lose some important things in our lives. Stability: The sense that “I’m in control of things.” This is a sense of things being within my comfort level. It may be things that make me feel good and safe. Feeling Good about life, may have absolutely nothing to do with personal intimacy in my relationship with God. In fact the people in Scripture who seemed to have a greater intimacy with God, were

those whose lives, nations and families, seemed to be going down the tubes.

Finding Joy in the Clouds | It doesn't feel like God draws as near without the clouds. There is an intimacy with him I have only experienced in the raging storm. –V.R. Risner

It seems the greatest intimacy is not experienced with God in times of peace and serenity and blessing, but in times of attempting to navigate the raging seas of life's storms. We should not be overly concerned with losing things that we cherish. We should be concerned with things that keep us from what we say we desire most, that is closeness with God.

Disciplines

Spiritual practices to Drawing Nearer to God may involve things to consider adding to my Christian life. "Faith" – Heb.11:6 –
"..without faith, it is impossible to please God."

"Works" – **Eph 2:10** ESV For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Some "works", must be the struggle to repent from our ways of living and strive toward new lifestyle practices as God's character is developed in us.

If we know of some ongoing sin in our life, and fail to deal with it, we are only distancing ourselves further from God. Any act of obedience to God's know word or will can demonstrate our love for God. (Jn.14:15). These Will demonstrate loving devotion and the true life of a genuine disciple. This is simple obedience, doing what we already know is right and pleasing to God, regardless of how we feel. Then trust God for any feeling He may choose to give – though feelings are more of a perceived need on our part, than from God's part.

Why do we not exercise more discipline when it comes to nurturing our relationship with God? He is our most important relationship of all.

ASSESSMENT:

- So how satisfied am I with my spiritual growth, progress, journey or maturity?
- What are my greatest areas of spiritual weakness that needs nurturing?
- Are there some steps that come to mind, that I could take toward developing a deeper intimacy with God? Such as regular Bible reading; study a particular topic; meditating on Scripture; steps of repentance; or steps of implementing obedience?

We would certainly spend time studying for an exam at school. We wouldn't think twice about working late hours to prepare for an interview or a report at work. It makes perfect sense if an athlete spends hours and hours exercising and preparing before she plays a soccer game in order to do well and hopefully, win. But when it comes to quite time with God, even a little, sometimes seems too much to ask. Why not be willing to do what is within our own power, to make our relation with God, just one step better?

This must not be done under duress, but carried out as an act of holy worship to God – a consecration or dedication of self, fully to God. If this is a genuine desire, then we must make it a top priority or else we will never sincerely pursue it.

QUIET TIME WITH GOD – *Drinking from the fountain*

“Our minds are like wild stallions that do not want to be tamed. The mind refuses to be ruled. It wanders wherever it wishes. It speeds ahead to the agenda of the day. It clamors for its own way.

It refuses to be bridled. It won't be still." --Rev. Richard W. LaFountain. This is the discipline of a quiet time with God.

It is a priority and part of a greater plan of Drawing Nearer to God through Intimacy.

Things to try:

- 1) a Readable devotional book - We have several good selections on our website "*Morning Page*". www.ChristEfca.org
- 2) Reading a passage of Scripture – regular reading of Scripture. (Bible Reading booklets on the literature counter)
- 3) Time in personal worship, outside of the Sunday morning gathering. A designated time and place is a helpful way to begin.
- 4) Prayer - private and corporate prayer or small group prayer.

We read. We think. We pray. And We listen to how God might impress His direction and will upon our minds. Disciplines are intentional steps towards Drawing Nearer to God through intimacy.

TIME, ATTENTION AND PURPOSE

Part of Drawing Nearer involves assessment and evaluation of our spiritual life. How does a given activity affect my relationship with God? How does this practice or pass time affect my intimacy with God? Does this activity or focus accentuate my desire for God or does it minimize my interest in God?

If your desire is deeper intimacy with God, then that must become your greatest of all other desires. Only your greatest desire will become your personal pursuits.

Nurturing desire for God

Job 22:26 For then you will **delight yourself** in the Almighty and lift up your face to God.

Psa 37:4 **Delight yourself** in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

How can I begin to nurture sincere desire for deeper intimacy with God?

Jer 9:23-24 ESV Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, (24) but let him who boasts boast in this, **that he understands and knows me**, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I **delight**, declares the LORD."

Jer 29:12-13 ESV Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. (13) You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Remember, Satan does not want you to find delight in God. **Desire for God is in itself, a spiritual battle.** Satan does not want you to really desire to Draw Nearer to God. He wants you disappointed with God. He wants you to remain distanced from God. He wants you too tired and too busy to Draw Nearer to God. He wants you angry with God. He wants you superficial with God. He wants you distracted from God by lesser things. He wants you routine with God. He wants you to feel like it's a waste of time Drawing Nearer to God.

Ultimately **DRAWING NEARER** is not about me feeling better about my devotions or my relationship with God. The bottom line is not really about your own spiritual progress or maturity. It is about becoming the person God wants us to be; its doing what God wants us to be involved in; its about living in a manner in which is most pleasing to God. It is doing what is within our power to be the person God saved you to be; to give to God the glory He alone deserves to receive from you; Because He is God and we are here for Him.

That is why we are here. That is why we are involved in Drawing Nearer to God in Intimacy, because we are to be instruments of taking God's heart and life and glory and praises and message and love and hope and introducing God and His love , mercy, goodness, glory and praise worthiness, into the lives of others in whom God is getting no glory and from whom He receives no praises. Drawing Nearer to God, makes us better "**Glory Spreaders.**"

ASSIGNMENT: HANDOUT ASSESSMENT TOOL (LifeWay)

Give God what He deserves whether we feel it or not.

This is not falsely or hypocritically going through the motions. It is doing what is right as a Christian because God deserves our best and our deepest, regardless of our feelings or whether we think we benefit personally from it.

Deut. 32:3 ESV For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! (ascribe= give, consider, attach to)

1Chron. 16:28 ESV Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!

1Ch 16:29 ESV ***Ascribe*** to the LORD the glory ***due*** his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;

Psa 7:17 ESV I will give to the LORD the thanks ***due*** to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.

Psa 63:6 ESV when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

Psa 77:3 ESV When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints. Selah.

Psa 77:11 ESV I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

Psa 77:12 ESV I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.

Lam 3:21-23 MKJV I ***recall*** this to my mind; therefore I hope. (22) It is by Jehovah's kindnesses that we are not destroyed, because His mercies never fail. (23) They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

When we meditate on God's Word and works, we are intentionally taking steps to focus on Him; to recollect His involvement in our lives maybe over several years or even a lifetime. And as Ps.77:11 states, the more we think on His goodness, the more our hearts begin to desire Him.

I ***will*** draw near. I ***will*** give God glory. I ***will*** offer Him praise. I ***will*** purposefully take the next steps to do what is within my power to Draw Nearer to God.



Gophers in the Garden

HINDRANCES TO INTIMACY WITH GOD

and hindrances to being good “glory Spreaders

These are things pertaining to time, attention and purpose, and life practices. Gophers sure are cute. But they sure can do a lot of damage to your garden. Gophers in your garden are things that can rob you of your intimacy with God.

Sins that beset us are practices that ensnare us and trip us up, in our spiritual journey. Weights are things that hinder. They may not be sins, but they are things that distract us, distance us from God, slow us down, take up our time and attention and energy. They cause us to slowly but surely lose momentum, subtly causing us to fall behind and ultimately lose the race before us.

SIN – confess our sins to God.

1Jn 1:9 ESV If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

WORRY – fear

Psa 55:22 ESV Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

1Pet. 5:6-7 ESV Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, (7) casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

ANXIETY - uncertainty; stress of distress in your spirit.

Luk 12:22-31 ESV And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be **anxious** about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. (23) For life is more than

food, and the body more than clothing. (24) Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! (25) And which of you by being **anxious** can add a single hour to his span of life? [31) Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you]

PAIN – heart pain, relationship pain; mental pain and anguish; We must admit pain, offense, hurt, bitterness and unforgiveness to God.

Eph 4:31-32 ESV Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (32) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

ONGOING CONFLICT – robbing peace, causing a distressed or agitated spirit

- “A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict...”, and robs peace (Prov. 15:18).
- "A perverse person stirs up conflict, and separates friends" (Prov.16:28
- “The greedy stir up conflict...” (Prov. 28:25).
- By pride comes nothing but strife,..” (Pro 13:10
- A hateful spirited person stirs up strife (Pro 10:12

Boundaries are markers. Barriers are defenses from damaging forms of influence. Some people may do well to consider taking steps to set up healthy barriers from sources of conflict or people of constant conflict for the sake of being able to focus more on Drawing Nearer to God without the energy and distraction which comes from ongoing strife and stress.

PRIDE – God opposes the pride – 1Pet.5:5

BUSY-NESS – “Be still and know that I am God...(Ps.46:10 –

PURSUIT OF RICHES – Talk to God about this and allow Him to answer.

Pro 28:20 A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.

WORLDLY pursuits or , or un-spiritual desires

Jas 4:4 ESV You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

GOSSIP / SLANDER 2 Cor.12:20

2Cor. 12:20 ESV For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish--that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.

ATTACKS FROM THE ENEMY – oppression,

1Pet 5:8 ESV Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Uncontrollable circumstances – failure to trust God in your circumstances. Most often because we fear that God’s will in our circumstances are different than our own. We fear He will not allow things to go the way I desire them to. God promises; “My ways are not your ways..”^[Is.55:8]

The greatest gopher of all in our garden is, our greatest desires not aligning with God's will and desire for us.

Isa 55:8-13 ESV (6) "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; (8) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. (9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts

You may think you know God's plan and purpose for you, but you may need to think again. We could be wrong. The desires of our flesh, so easily lead us astray and away from God's intended path of life and righteousness.^[Ps.23:3]

Some gophers in our garden may be nothing more than simple, subtle distractions that we had not previously viewed as hindrances.

CONSIDER THE RESULTS OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

All the issues of life flow out of our relationship with God. All the relations of life are affected by our most important relationship of all. "Come unto me..." "Learn of me and find Rest". "Drink" from Christ and experience a fountain of living water In you. Come to me all you who are thirsty and drink. Come and Drink that your soul might live; be revived & nurtured to thrive and flourish. (Is55)

Intimacy with God can result in...

1) Present Life Change – This change allows God's life and character to fill us and to be lived out as we spread His glory. Life Change involves being with Christ, and becoming more like

Christ. His presence is life molding. His Life and presence is attitude changing and purpose renewing.

Intimacy with God will be a struggle. Struggle with dis-interest – seemingly boring worship or quiet time. Struggle with pursuing intimacy but life not working as hoped; issues taking too long to work out or come together; intimacy not forthcoming as soon as we had hoped.

Perhaps it is a struggle with personal discipline in doing what it takes. A Time, a place, busy-ness. Other priorities get our attention and affection. Intimacy with God is like a cross country journey. We don't just step outside our front door, take a couple of steps and suddenly find ourselves on some West Coast Beach. It's a journey and our journey with Jesus Christ is life-long.

2) Greater Relations with God: Personal life change may lead to deeper and more satisfying relations with God.

2Tim. 2:20-21 ESV Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. (21) Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, *useful* to the master of the house, ready for *every good work*.

There may be life changing work that God wants to perform in us, in order to open doors of greater depth in our relationship with Him. The closer our walk with the Lord, the better prepared we are for the things He has prepared for us in our service to Him. Love and intimacy with God will lead to more devoted service.

Deeper intimacy with God, can result in being...

3) More Influential toward others: When God rubs off on us, we rub off on others. We can't help to talk about him. We can't help but be more like him. We can't stop Him from using us as instruments.

A result of a life of intimacy with God, will flow out of you and in turn, you will **positively** affect the lives of others.

Isa 55:1-6 ESV "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (2) Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. (3) Incline your ear, and **come to me; hear, that your soul may live**; ...and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

God is a fountain of living water, welling up inside us. This Fountain that wells up within you also flows out of you and overflows into the lives of others, helping others to know God better and more deeply. It can help others to learn God's Truth, helping them to come to faith in Christ and become a true Disciple of Jesus.

Joh 4:13-14 ESV Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will **become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life**."

God is the fountain inside each believing Christian, which bubbles up and fills one with the life of God in them. The word for

“welling up” refers to jumping up. This fountain is active, energetic, and eager to fill us up and to burst forth out of us into or onto the lives of others.

*God is a fountain within each Christian.
He is Out-Pouring and Over-Flowing.*

This is a fountain that was never meant to remain inside a person.



A car's cooling system is a closed system and not meant to get outside the system. The human blood system is a closed system. It is not meant to spring a leak and gush out, if it does, then we have a problem.

But a fountain is not meant to be contained, but to affect all those who come near to it. And the fountain of God inside us is the fountain of intimacy and relationship with God. It is intended to bubble up, flow out and spew forth from our hearts and lives and deluge those around us with the presence and life of God.

Now look at the picture of the fountain. It is doing what a fountain is supposed to be doing; getting others wet! Imagine this fountain as God in us. He is this fountain of living water in us, bursting forth and spewing out onto all those around us. This represents the life of God in us, being lived so that His life and love pours out of our lives and into the lives of others.



God is our Fountain! I pray that each of us will be willing to do what it takes to take the next step toward Drawing Nearer to God through intimacy and see where He wants to take us.

DRAWING NEARER to God!

Whatever it takes!

Wherever It takes us!

***“Blessed is the one who does Whatever It Takes
and goes Wherever It Takes Him”***

EXTRAS:

In the Bible, being Blessed by God is somehow referring to being unusually affected and experiencing the nearness of God in unexpected ways. It refers to His unmerited favor, upon undeserving recipients. And yet, God’s blessings are mostly connected to some practice of lifestyle that is pleasing to God.

In my E-Sword Bible Program I searched, “**Blessed is the Man**” and came up with this list. Note: Blessed is the Man was linked to some form of action we take or obedience to some known principle of God.

“BLESSED IS THE MAN”

Psa 1:1 **Blessed is the man** who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

Psa 32:2 **Blessed is the man** against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Psa 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! **Blessed is the man** who takes refuge in him!

Psa 40:4 **Blessed is the man** who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!

[Psa 94:12; Psa 112:1; Isa 56:2; Jer 17:7; Rom 4:8; Jas 1:12]

“BLESSED ARE”...

Psa 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. **Blessed are** all who take refuge in him.

Psa 84:4 **Blessed are** those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah.

Psa 84:5 **Blessed are** those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

Psa 89:15 **Blessed are** the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your countenance,

Psa 106:3 **Blessed are** they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!

Psa 119:1 **Aleph. Blessed are** those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!

Psa 119:2 **Blessed are** those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,

Psa 144:15; Pro 20:7; Isa 30:18; Mat 5:3; Mat 5:4;
Mat 5:5; Mat 5:6; Mat 5:7; Mat 5:8; Mat 5:9; Mat 5:10;
Mat 5:11; Mat 13:16; Mat 16:17; Luk 6:20; Luk 6:21;
Luk 6:22; Luk 10:23; Luk 12:37; Luk 12:38; Joh 13:17;
Joh 20:29; Rom 4:7; Rev 1:3; Rev 19:9; Rev 22:14;



"DRAWING NEARER"

To the Church through Frequent Fellowship

Theme: Drawing Nearer

Jan.22; Feb.5, 2017

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching
and the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers
--- Acts 2:42

Fellowship is like ice tea; it can be as sweet as can be,
Or it can become a bitter disappointment.
_____ -rp Journey

DRAWING NEARER TO GOD through Deeper Intimacy

DRAWING NEARER TO THE CHURCH through Frequent Fellowship

DRAWING NEARER TO THE LOST through Passionate Outreach

DRAWING NEARER TO MY CALLING through Sacrificial Service

INTRODUCTION

“Wherever we are presently, we can take the next step
toward Drawing Nearer together, through more frequent
faithful fellowship with other brothers and sisters in Christ.”

Act 2:41-42 ESV So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they ***devoted*** themselves to the apostles' teaching and the ***fellowship***, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

DRAWING NEARER to the Church family emphasizes the importance of the Church or the Body of Christ in our individual lives. It involves my Frequent Fellowship with the church family – ***Connecting with other believers***

This is focused on my own personal interaction with other believers, in the church setting and is the community level of relational involvement with the church family. This can be through gathering and participating together in prayer, Bible studies; Evangelistic outreach; small groups, visiting, encouraging others, etc. The key word here is “gathering”. This means actually meeting together in the same place, at the same time, with face to face, interaction.

For some, their experience with church life has been more negative than positive. But for most believers, the church experience has been a challenge and an encouragement, and that which has nurtured their faith to bring them to where they are today.

Church: - ἐκκλησία; ekklēsia; “called out”

- **Generically**: 1) “church” is a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating; it was a reference to the assembly of the Israelites. [Thayer Lexicon]

- **Specifically**: 2) in a Christian sense, Church is an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting.

- 2a) a company of Christians, or of those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rites, hold their own gatherings and manage their own affairs, according to their shared convictions, as prescribed in Holy Scripture.
- 2b) those believers in Christ, who anywhere, in any city, village, or nation - constitute such a company and are united into one body, even though scattered throughout the earth.

The Value of the Church Family Life

Families are not perfect nor ideal and neither are church families. But just as biological families are intended to supply provisions, support, encouragement, love, acceptance, guidance and growth, so is the Church family. If you think that when you attend Sunday worship that you have experienced all the church life that God has for you, you are mistaken.

While worship together is a very important part of Church family life, there is much, much more. Church life may involve personal accountability, mutual encouragement and community support. Church life requires, conviction of the Biblical need and purpose of the church. It also requires commitment to make the effort to nurture this area of my spiritual development.

“Church” can be a setting or environment where...

Church family life fosters growth and change

Drawing Nearer to the Church family emphasizes the importance of the whole Church family, in the life of every individual believer. We need one another. The church is both a tool and an environment of spiritual development.

Even the challenging relationships you experience in Church are all part of God smoothing off our rough edges, and nurturing in you and me, a heart of kindness, patience and acceptance, much like the heart of Christ Himself.

Instead of leaving a church due to problems, “Drawing Nearer” would view challenges as God purifying our character and nurturing our spiritual growth.



Imagine You have a full and functioning refrigerator. You also have a full oven, cooking foods of all kinds. Turn the fridge off and open the door. Turn the oven off and open the doors. It is only a matter of time until cold things in the fridge rise to



room temperature. Likewise, the hot things in the oven cool to room temperature. Both cold and hot tend to self-adjust to match room temperature or the immediate environment.

The Church is a Christian environment to help keep us on track and keep us from drifting in the direction of room temperature. We need ¹genuine encouragement, ²courageous support, ³loving accountability, in order to keep a proper level of spiritual life and fervor.

Room Temperature

The church family experience is intended to keep each of us from drifting toward room temperature and to fan the flame of spiritual growth and passion for Jesus Christ.

To The church of Laodicea Jesus said...

Rev 3:15-16 ESV "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! (16) So, because you are [lukewarm], and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

DRAWING NEARER TOGETHER

As the church family, we are to be Drawing Nearer Together, as together, we are drawing nearer to God. The key word today is “Together”. As we are Drawing Nearer together, we are also, together, Drawing Nearer to God.

Imagine you are in your kitchen with a large kettle of hearty, chunky soup simmering on the stove. As you serve the soup to your guests, you look at the soup and you realize that, before you dish out the soup, something needs done first? What is it? The Soup needs to be stirred, because all the hearty chunks have settled to the bottom. There is no doubt they are there. They just need stirred up a bit.



Now look to the person next to you. That person is an individual kettle of hearty, chunky vegetable soup. And perhaps like that kettle of soup, there are things in their lives that need stirred up. This the focus of this morning's message is "stirring up the good stuff"

This refers to Drawing Nearer to one another, as together, we are Drawing Nearer to God. Drawing Nearer to God in intimacy is best nurtured through the church experience and Christian interaction.

Heb 10:19-20 ESV Therefore, brothers, since **we** have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, (20) by the new and living way that he opened for **us** through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,

The focus here is "togetherness" or the community experience within the family of God, the body of Christ. Together we are Drawing Nearer to God and to one another, and in the process moving away from Luke-warmness as we fire up one another's fervor in the Lord.

This is not to the few special people or the privileged, but to the church as a whole. This is Christians fellowshiping together and growing together and moving together, in Drawing Nearer to God.

This can take place because ...

Together, we have Access to God, through What Christ has accomplished at Calvary.

Heb 10:19-20 ESV (19) Therefore, brothers, since we have **confidence** to **enter the holy place** by the blood of Jesus, (20) by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,

The “*Holy place*” is the holy presence of God. We confidently have access to Him, because of Christ’s death-blood sacrifice for us who has removed the barrier of our sin and opened the way to approach God, through faith in Christ.

“*Living Way*” – we remain alive, because Jesus paid our death penalty for us so through Him, whereby we may approach the holy of holies of God’s presence. Though we die physically, we will live eternally with Him.

“*Confidence*”: - refers to our personal faith and confidence in Christ’s work on the cross to pay for our sins and provide access into God’s holy presence, through faith.

Heb 4:16 *Let us* then with confidence (boldly), ***draw near*** to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

So our summary so far: The book of Hebrews is all about true believers in Jesus(the church), taking steps together and helping each other to Draw Nearer to God, because of what Christ has accomplished for us. This is about stirring up one another’s faith.

Drawing Nearer together means that ...

Together, we have Assurance that our spiritual needs have been met.

In the book of Hebrews, the term “Draw Near” is used 8 times and the phrase “Let Us” is used 14 times. So when we read the phrase “***Let Us***”, remember the key word is “together”.

Heb 10:21-22 ESV (21) and since we have a great priest over the house of God, (22) ***let us(together)*** draw near with a true heart in ***full assurance*** of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

It does not say, “every single one of you draw near, but “Let us” - plural, joint concept, combined effort, a shared endeavor, traveling and growing in the same direction. Each person is ultimately responsible for influencing the whole church. As the Church gathers together, the shared experience is intended to foster, faithful fellowship. Drawing Nearer together(with one another), as together, we are Drawing Nearer to God.

Fellowship – *κοινωνία* koinōnía **Thayer Definition:**

- 1) fellowship, association, with community; a communion, joint participation, deep and intimate spiritual relationships;
Christian fellowship is the unseen affinity or bond of common family, purpose, beliefs and activities.
- 1b) fellowship; that which is spiritually shared by believers in Christ anywhere in the world, whether living or dead.

Christian fellowship is what we experience with no one else except other true believers in Jesus Christ.

Together we have fellowship in the gospel (Phil.1:3-5). **Together** we have fellowship in giving to help others (Phil.4:15). **Together** we have fellowship in the Holy Spirit (2Cor.13:14). **Together** we have fellowship in Christ Himself (1Cor.1:9). And **Together** we have fellowship in helping and serving others.(2Cor:8:4). We are to be stirring up one another’s faith.

Through Fellowship -- “Let Us” – that is together as a church family – as Christians fellowshiping together, and helping one another as we Draw Nearer to God. If someone in the church is lacking in Assurance, the others in the church who do have Assurance should offer those Re-Assurance. This is a family affair. It is a group thing. This is not a solo act or a lone ranger pursuit.

Drawing Nearer together → ←, as together, we are Drawing Nearer.

As we are Drawing Nearer, what is our direction?

OUR SHARED HOPE

As a church family, we are Drawing Nearer toward God, together, through a shared Hope. We need to be willing to stir up one another's hope.

Heb 13:8 ESV Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Together as a Church family...

We Hope in the past, present and future

Jesus Christ is the same Yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Therefore, His character and His ministry are effectually the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow. In times of weakness, strength & wavering. In weakness, let us Draw Near to others to help them be strong. In uncertainty, let us Draw Nearer together to help others with stable hope. Some may be feeling weak and lacking in hope; that all the good stuff in their faith kettle has settled to the bottom and is in need of being stirred up. That's the time when they often decide to stay home from Church gatherings and keep to themselves.

We don't stay home from the doctor because we feel sick and don't feel like it. That is the time we need to go to the doctor. And when others are feeling down, discouraged, disheartened or weak in faith, is not the time to stay home and keep separated from the church family. In fact it is the time when they may need interaction with the church family all the more.

Heb 10:23 (23) **Let us**(*together*) hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who **promised** is **faithful**.

In order for God ordained fellowship to occur in the church, we must gather together. **Let us** (*together*) hold fast – hang on – persevere without wavering. **Let us** (*together*) lay hold of the hope we have in Christ and refuse to let go. Remembering the work of God through Christ, in our lives, refusing to allow others to walk alone in the darkness; refusing to allow others to struggle alone.

For those who are weakened in this area and have trouble holding onto their hope, there are others in the church family who are strong enough for others – for a time – to be carried along by their hope and by their faith. We are not saved by another person's faith. But we certainly can be carried along and strengthened by another person's faith and hope when ours is waning.

One stirs up another person's faith.. One person's passion helps heat another person's luke-warmness and fires up their fervor. Their faith has to be their own personal faith, but when that is weak, those who are stronger than I am, as Christians are obligated before God to help those of us who are struggling with our own personal challenges and discouragements.

We can help others recall and to be mindful of God's goodness and faithfulness as our life Source. Yesterday, today and tomorrow – in our past, in our present and in our future – He is our life Source.

Drawing Nearer to Share Hope, we...

Patiently offer Hope to those lacking

One person's hope can become another person's hope. One person can nurture, instill, build up, and stir up the hope in another. One person can help shoulder and bear the burden of someone else who

may be at that moment, struggling and too weak to carry their burden on their own.

The Church family or community of believers – is ¹intended for my own personal development and spiritual maturity. And ²the church family is for my participation and contribution to the spiritual well-being of my overall church family, in offering strength in their times of weakened or failing hope.

Frequent faithful fellowship is not so much about me being blessed, but about me being a blessing to others. It is not about you getting or receiving, but about giving of yourself and contributing to the needs and well-being and spiritual growth of others.

Heb 7:19 (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we **draw near** to God.

Often times we are weak in hope. IN times like this, we need others who are stronger in hope, to help.

1Th 5:14 ESV And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, **help** the weak, be patient with them all.

You can't experience this kind of fellowship dynamic by staying home, isolated from the church family. We need one another, and I would say, you cannot offer this experience with others in need, if you don't mingle and mix with the church family, outside the Sunday morning worship service.

I'd like to briefly address...

Masks at church? Of course! Can you imagine what it would be like if we came to church and every time someone said, "Good Morning, How are you today?" And if we answered honestly?

We'd never make it past the front entry way. Why? Because the larger, open worship service is not really the time or the place to pour out all the mess of your life.

So realize that in some respects, we do wear masks as we come to church. Not because people enjoy living a lie, but because they're needing a more personal time with another brother or sister in Christ, to care enough to connect with them, listen to their story, offer their support and walk with them along the difficulty of their journey.

The pastor can't do all that. The pastor shouldn't do all that. And it shouldn't fall on 1 or 2 people to be the ones who are always connecting and visiting, and listening and building up hope in others. So we need to take time to connect with people in the church, outside the morning worship service in order to provide opportunity for them to share how they really feel and how life is really going for them.

Let's not be quick to criticize others for putting on a fake smile and wearing masks to church. But also let us not be slow in being interested in others and sensitively taking time to be a temporary source of strength for those who are momentarily weak.

OFFERING LOVING ENCOURAGEMENT

Together we are Drawing Nearer to offer loving encouragement to one another in Christ. I'd like to offer, somewhat of a bold statement. ¹You cannot become the person God wants you to be, without a deep and solid connection to your Church family. ²Also, your Church will never become all it could be, without your own connection and contribution to it. You see, not only can you take the next step towards personal spiritual maturity, but each of us can help – you personally can help the church family be the church

God wants us to be. Not just a religious organization, but a spiritual family. Not just an entity, but a gathering group of believers with skills, abilities, concerns, and gifts, all with a common goal and purpose – which is to point the world to Christ and to encourage other believer's in their journey.

Within the church family, we have opportunity to stir up one another and to offer loving encouragement toward spiritual growth and maturity. Encouragement means to instill courage or bring comfort. Not criticism. Not complaining. Not gossip or slandering.

We are to practice Stirring up LOVE

* That is, God like attitudes and actions.

Heb 10:24-25 ESV (24) And let us(together) consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.



Stir up love and good works – not by criticizing; not by insulting, but by encouraging. It seems easier to rebuke someone for doing wrong, than to encourage them in doing better. Rebuking

or criticizing someone gets our frustration off our chest.

Encouraging someone involves time, development, patience and most likely repetitive attempts at the same thing. But encouragement is more likely to have the positive results that Scripture points to.

Encouragement does not mean giving someone an “atta boy” for failure or for some inappropriate lifestyle. But it does mean you offer them courage and support for them to try again and perhaps to do better.

Gal 6:2 ESV Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

“Bear” = to lift or to put one’s self under another person’s burden.

“Burden” = any load or weight; **Lit >**. to lift up another person’s abundance. **Spec.>** to come along side another person with support and be used of God to support them as a temporary source of strength.

Perhaps you may think as did Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Surely, I am not responsible for the spiritual well-being of others? If you hold to that perspective - One day you will have a very difficult time supporting that position before God.

PRINCIPLE: Law of Christ is Genuine Christian Love(Gal6:2).

MEANS: Christians working together toward mutual Spiritual maturity in a spirit of gentleness.

GOAL OR PURPOSE: the Restoration of fallen brother in relationship with God; the filling an empty person with hope; the instilling of positive encouragement to persevere, trusting God to help and bring about life change.

Without love we are acting in pride or self-righteousness. Without gentleness, we are acting in a spirit of criticism and condemnation.

Ecc 4:9-10 (9) Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. (10) For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has no one to lift him up!

Anyone can tear someone down and in so doing, contribute to the problem. But I believe it takes the leading of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life to intentionally take the time and put forth the effort

to lift up one who has fallen. I guess if I had the choice, I'd rather be a "lifter upper".

It is through encouragement, that we can stir up love.

We are Also to practice Stirring up GOOD WORKS

(Heb.10:24-25)

Heb 10:24-25 ESV (24) And **let us** consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.



Stir up means to provoke, or incite others on. We all know how to incite a disturbance or how to incite an argument. We know how to stir up trouble or contribute to hurt feelings and resentment.

What we are urged to do here is to provoke or incite others toward attitudes of love and actions of good works.

Our attitude; words; our goal of conversation; our motives should be first, to incite, not irritation in others, but love and acts of compassion.

“Good works” – obedience; reaching out; helping the body; kind compassion - and even comforting others.

Gal 6:9-10 ESV And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (10) So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

**We must also be Stirring up a
PERSEVERING SPIRIT within the
church family.**

These were the practices in the early church.



1Th. 5:14 ESV And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, **help** the weak, be patient with them all.

The Third Persecution, Under Trajan, A.D. 108

In the third persecution Pliny the Second, a man learned and famous, seeing the lamentable slaughter of Christians, and moved therewith to pity, wrote to Trajan, certifying him that there were many thousands of them daily put to death, of which none did any thing contrary to the Roman laws worthy of persecution. "The whole account they gave of their crime or error (whichever it is to be called) amounted only to this-- that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to repeat together a set form of prayer to Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by an obligation--not indeed to commit wickedness; but, on the contrary--never to commit theft, robbery, or adultery, never to falsify their word, never to defraud any man: after which it was their custom to separate, and reassemble to partake in common of a harmless meal." [Fox's Book of Martyrs]

This was a pagan commentary of the practice of the early persecuted Christians. They gathered together faithfully, for fellowship and mutual encouragement, and for the mutual building up of their faith.

Their strong encouragement provided strong motivation to persevere in the faith. Good reason to look beyond our own

situation and see the greater purpose and the heavenly future that awaits us.

ASSIGNMENT:

Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi (13th Century)

"Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light; Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console, To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life."

Someone in this church family needs your listening ear and your heart of compassion. Someone at your work, may need someone who will listen, with genuine concern.

We can practice nurturing and stirring up by...

* **LISTENING** ¹to others with the intent of hearing their story, |
²and understanding their situation, and | ³giving courage for them
to continue their journey with Christ.

* **RESISTING** ¹the temptation to share you're your own story. |
²Resist the temptation of topping their pain or sorry, or problem
with your own. | ³Resist the temptation of attempting to solve
their problem with quick fix advice.

What people need more is ¹a listening ear, ²a compassionate heart, ³a non-judgmental spirit and ⁴a silent presence.

* **LOOKING** for ways to ¹help, ²lift up, ³build up, ⁴encourage, ⁵stabilize, ⁶stir up love and good works,



Remember, there is a fountain within each and every believing Christian. It is the eternal life of God in our life. It is welling up, flowing out, and spewing forth onto and into the lives of others around us, and especially in the church family.

Joh 4:14 ESV but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
(Jn.7:38)

So, "Spring up oh Well, spring up!"



"DRAWING NEARER"

To the Lost through Passionate Outreach

Theme: Missions Sunday

January 29, 2017

Text: Mat.28:18-20

"Draw Near and join this chariot."
-- Acts 8:29

They will not Seek, unless they are *Sought*. They will be not Come,
unless they are *Brought*. They will not Learn, unless they are *Taught*.
-unknown

DRAWING NEARER TO GOD Through Deeper Intimacy

DRAWING NEARER TO THE CHURCH through Frequent Fellowship

DRAWING NEARER TO THE LOST through Passionate Outreach

DRAWING NEARER TO MY CALLING through Sacrificial Service

INTRODUCTION

Today is the 5th Sunday and is Missions Sunday. And I have some Missions statistics for us to think about this morning.

Consider...

THE WORLD AROUND US AND THE TASK OF EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

These are some statistics on the global human population. In the year 2014 the global population was an estimated 7,174,611,584. Today the population is 7.5 billion. The present global birth rate is around 350,000/day, which is 131.4 million/yr. The global death rate is 151,600/day, which is 53 million/yr. So the birth rate exceeds the death rate AND averages out to a global population increase of 73 million/yr; or 200,000/day; or 140/min; or 2.3/sec.

In 10yrs, in the year 2027, the Est. global population will be over 8 billion people. And in the year 2525 – “if man is still alive; if woman can survive, they may find...” [*words by Zaeger and Evans*] that will be 508yrs. With an estimated global population of 46,624,000,000. That’s a lot of people, unless something happens between now and then.

Total People Groups in the world are 16,761.

- Total **Unreached** People Groups (UPGs) are approximately 7,050.

A people group refers to the largest group of people, within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement, without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance" (Source: 1982 Lausanne Committee Chicago meeting.)

- Total Population of UPGs is approximately 2.88 billion people.

- Total Percentage of world: UPG's make up 42.1% of world population

“Lost” refers to people who are without Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Can you guess how many “Lost” people there are in Western Crawford County alone? **“TOO MANY”**. Do you know how many genuine disciples of Jesus Christ there are in North Western Crawford County? **“NOT ENOUGH.”** Where there is one lost soul, there is need for a missionary and there are approximately 60 potential missionaries sitting in here today.

A Missionary is anyone – *Anyone* who is a true believer in Jesus Christ, who finds themselves in the middle of a kingdom moment and has the opportunity to share Christ in their life with someone else. **We can be a missionary, everywhere we go, in everything we do, to everyone we meet.**

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Mat 28:19-20 **ESV** **GO** therefore and make disciples of all nations, **BAPTIZING** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) **TEACHING** them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Command is NOT to **“Go”**. The Command is to **“make disciples** of all peoples”. Paraphrase: “In your going... or As you are Going...” - You are to Make Disciples of all peoples.” How? - --“baptizing (present active participle), and “teaching them” – (present active participle).

The assumption that is made, is that the disciples were already going, living, moving about, many fleeing persecution and interacting in their culture and community as they went.

*In your going...In the course of your daily living... Make Disciples!! We are to be missionaries on the **GO**!*

3 EXAMPLES OF MISSIONARIES ON THE GO

These are kingdom moments galore.

EXAMPLE #1) PHILIP & THE ETHIOPIAN

ALONG THE ROAD Acts 8:26-40 *"As He Was Going"*

Act 8:29-40 ESV (26) Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and **GO** toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. (27) And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship (28) and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. (29) And the Spirit said to Philip, "**GO** over and join this chariot."

Observe that...

(1) We See Philip is somehow sensitive to the moving of God for Him to be going. (v26)

(2) We take note that Philip was interested enough to take note of a man reading Scripture.(v27)

(3) Philip was obedient enough to God and cared enough for the man's soul, that he approached and engaged. (v30-31)

Act 8:30-31 (30) So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (31) And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him..

(4) Philip was also courageous enough to ask him a question.

(5) The Ethiopian was clearly interested enough in spiritual things to be reading the prophet Isaiah (32-34). Then the Ethiopian asked Philip a question.

Act 8:32-34 (32) Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth"^[Is.53:7-8]

(33) In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

(34) And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"

Act 8:35-38 (35) Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. (36) And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" (38) And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

"As He Was Going..." (1) He was available. (2) He was interested. (3) He was obedient. (4) He allowed the Holy Spirit of God to guide and give him words. And as He was going, he was connecting with others.

EXAMPLE #2) JESUS & THE WOMAN AT THE WELL (Jn.4:7-41) *"As He Was Going..."*

Joh 4:7 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

(1) Jesus engages in conversation and makes a relational connection (v7)

He asks a favor and she responds with a Question. This was a kingdom moment.

2) Jesus offers her spiritual life, meaningful life (v13-15)

Joh 4:13-15 (13) Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (15) The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." (16) Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

This fountain (v14) is the life of God Himself, inside the believing Christian; welling up, flowing out and spewing forth into the lives of others.

3) The Woman Realizes Jesus is not just a good man (v19)

Joh 4:19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a *prophet*."

4) She realizes that Jesus is not merely a prophet of God but the Son of God (v25)

Joh 4:25 The woman said to him, "I *know that Messiah* is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." (26) Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

5) The woman goes to tell others about Jesus (v28-30)

Joh 4:28-30 (28) So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, (29) "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (30) They went out of the town and were coming to him.

This woman connects with Jesus, then goes and connects with others in her village and brings them to connect them to Jesus.

6) The people we connect with for Jesus, are connecting with others for Jesus. (v39-41

Joh 4:39-41 (39) Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." (40) So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. **(41)** And many more believed because of His word.

Never, ever underestimate the power of your own testimony. It is not a substitute for the gospel, but can still be useful in connecting others to Christ. This event wasn't something Jesus had to schedule into his day or cram into his already busy schedule. This took place, "*As He Was Going...*" or in the course of his daily activities.

EXAMPLE #3) JESUS & THE MAN BORN BLIND

(John 9:1-38

"As He Was Going..."

John 9:1 ESV As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.

(1) Jesus heals a man born blind. One of the few times, when a person was not seeking Jesus nor asking him for help. (v1-7

Please follow this man's testimony through this chapter.

John 9:8-10 (8) The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" (9) Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "**I am the man.**"

Watch now as his testimony develops.

John 9:10-34 (10) So they said to him, ¹"Then how were your eyes opened?" (11) ^{1a}He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." (12) They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." (13) They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. (14) Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. (15) So the Pharisees again asked him ²how he had received his sight. And he said to them, ^{2a}"He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." (16) Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. (17) ³So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, ^{3a}"He is a prophet." (18) The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight (19) and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" (20) His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. (21) But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." (22) (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews

had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) (23) Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." (24) ⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." (25) He answered, ^{4a}"Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." (26) ⁵They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" (27) He answered them, ^{5a}"I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" (28) And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. (29) We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." (30) The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. (31) We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. (32) Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. (33) If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Wow! His personal testimony develops from simple to profound and compelling. In the text above each interrogating question asked by the Pharisees and each answer by the healed man is noted. As the conversation progresses, the man's personal testimony becomes more and more confident, more and more powerful and more and more convicting to his interrogators.

Our lesson here is not the example of Jesus sharing with the blind man, but with the blind man sharing with the religious leaders. Instead our lesson is on:

(2) the power of our own personal testimony of the work of God in our own lives. (Lk.12:12/Mat.10:19-20)

We must not be embarrassed or unprepared to tell others what has occurred, first hand, in our own lives as a result of believing and following Jesus Christ.

(3) The power of the Holy spirit as He gives us the words we need at the precise time we need them.

1Pet. 3:15 ESV but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

(4) He was more interested in giving testimony for Christ than he was afraid of making someone upset. He was respectful in his response. But he was not fearful for the repercussions. “It is what it Is!”

John 9:35-38 (35) Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (36) He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" (37) Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." (38) He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

(5) The All-Important Invitation - Do You Believe?(v35)

What would keep you from trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior right now? *“As You are Going ...” or ”* In the course of your day – look for and respond to the kingdom moments that God brings about in your life. Share with others and don’t be afraid to invite them to believe and receive Christ.

Consider our Assignment...

LOVING GOD AND LOVING OTHERS. INSEPARABLE PRINCIPLES IN GOD'S KINGDOM WORK.

Our relationship and concern for others, will be the overflow of our relationship with God. (Mat.22:37-39) Everything depends on our relationship with God!

Love God. Love Others. (v14

Mat 22:37-39 ESV And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (38) This is the great and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

2Cor. 5:14-21 ESV For the love of Christ compels us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live, might no longer live for themselves but for him who, for their sake, died and was raised. (16) From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. (17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (18) All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, ***God making his appeal through us. We implore*** you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (21) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God is the Initiator of the mission of reconciliation. God is the Source of this mission of Reconciliation. God is the Means of this mission of Reconciliation, being accomplished. God through us, is connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and bring about forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God and entrance into His eternal kingdom and family.

Imploring as God Himself were appealing (v20)

Through the believers in Christ, God was imploring or urging others to believe and be saved. This expresses an urgency in sharing the gospel of Christ and the testimony of our lives with any who will listen. Anywhere we go, in anything we do, to anyone we meet, we are to connect with others in order to connect them to Christ.

Every **ONE**, praying for Some **ONE**, connecting with Any **ONE**, and bringing that **ONE**. Imagine what could happen in **ONE** year.

MISSIONS: The Church sharing together in the gospel of Christ. Living it, Proclaiming it and Connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church. This is the work and mission of the church. Not just the pastor, not just the hired guns or just one or two special people in the church. "Missions" is intended to be part of every Christian's life and intended to occur, "...as we are going...". Missions is the family of God, working together to reach those still outside His family.

1Cor. 3:4-8 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? (5) What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. (6) I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. (7) So neither he who plants nor he who waters

is anything, but only God who gives the growth. (8) He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.

Foreign missions is nothing more than the far reaching effects of our own personal discipleship efforts. This verse speaks to the importance of every person reaching the lost and the celebrity status of no one in the church..

Our Assignment of Going...

IN YOUR GOING...

One of the great things about Missions is that our missionary God, uses everyone to do His missionary work. **We are all “*would be*” missionaries**

You are an ambassador for Christ. Many of the people you meet, are likely outside the family of God and are your potential “assignments”. How long has it been since you carried an inexpressible, burden or heaviness in your spirit for someone who is **lost** in their sins and on their way to hell?

How long has it been since you connected with that person and shared some of the hope you have in Christ? When was the last time you clearly shared your own faith with someone and then shared the gospel message of Salvation? And when was the last time you **urged** someone to believe and be saved or to be reconciled to God?

2Cor. 5:20-21 ESV Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We **implore** you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God.** (21) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This is not meant to be a guilt trip, but rather a reality check on our own personal involvement in doing our part in reaching the lost. Typically after a message like this, people come to me after the sermon and say something like, “Well I work in an office with people and that’s really not a very good place to talk about religious things.” Or “the only time I’m really around other family members is at the restaurant and that’s not a good time to talk about things like this – with the chance of them choking on a chicken wing and all.”

SO MISSIONS: is the Church sharing together in the gospel of Christ. Living it, Proclaiming it, Connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church. This is the work and mission of the church and should be part of every Christian’s reason for living and every church’s purpose for existing.

Missions is the church working together to reach those still outside God’s family. Heaven have mercy on the church for whom, God has to send a missionary from Korea or Timbuktu, to do the work of the church in our home town. That is our job! This is our mission field! I place myself in the pew with each of you today, because I think of this every week of my life. This lesson is for me and whoever feels God may be speaking to today. But Christian, this is what is on my heart:

We are without excuse!

We have no excuse not to share. We are without excuse before God for keeping the message of salvation to ourselves. There will be no acceptable excuse before God, for His ambassadors who refused to do the work He has chosen and given us to do. It is a message of Good News, of Great Joy, for all the people.(Lk.2;10)

ASSIGNMENT:

There are lots of reasons why we don't share our faith with others. BUT there are so many better reasons TO share our faith with others.

(1) Others are dying in their sins and we have the message of salvation and hope.

(2) Others are dying in their sins and we can help them step from death into life.

(3) Others are outside God's family and we can help them to believe in Jesus and be born again into His eternal family.

Those sound like pretty good reasons to be regularly Drawing Nearer to the Lost around us through passionate outreach. In so doing, we are actively connecting with others in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, His church.

“Touch Through Me”, Dottie Rambo

Touch through me, Holy Spirit, touch through me

Let my hands reach out to others, touch through me

There's a lonely soul somewhere needing just one friend to care

Touch through me, Holy Spirit, touch through me

Love through me, Holy Spirit, love through me

I will be my brother's keeper, love through me

Hearts are bleeding deep inside, love can dry the weeping eye

Love through me, Holy Spirit, love through me

Flow through me, Holy Spirit, flow through me

Like a river in the desert, flow through me

Springing power and healing strength, living water pure and clean

Flow through me, Holy Spirit, flow through me



"DRAWING NEARER"

To my calling through Sacrificial Service

Feb 12, 2017

{ "I have glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work You gave me to do." ---Jesus (Jn.17:4) }

"Serving not only brings you down into the world's reality,
it lifts you up to heaven's empathy..
---unknown

INTRODUCTION

Psa 100:1-5 ESV A Psalm for giving thanks. Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! (2) **Serve the LORD with gladness!** Come into his presence with singing! (3) Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. (4) Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! (5) For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Rom 12:11 ESV Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, **serve the Lord.**

Our focus this morning is Drawing Nearer to our Calling, through Sacrificial Service. God has a purpose, a calling, and a plan for the life of every person here; not just the paid people with a title.

2Thes. 1:11-12 ESV To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you **worthy of his calling** and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, (12) so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Discovering your God focused calling in 10 years involves pursuing and obeying God's known will for you TODAY. You won't wake up in 10 yrs and suddenly realize you're a doctor. You have to acknowledge that goal now – you have to pursue and prepare for that TODAY. The steps you take TODAY, will help you to arrive at your intended destination in 10 yrs.

However, God's will and calling for your life is not about 10 yrs down the road. God's purpose and will and plan and calling for you involves taking obedient steps TODAY and every day forward.

“If you are not purposefully serving the Lord, you are not knowingly fulfilling your calling.” Drawing Nearer to your calling is about living the life and fulfilling the purpose, for which God has created you.

Discovering God's will and uncovering God's calling for you, begins with Your own interest and desire to find God's will and sense His calling for your life.

EVERY DAY: “God, Show me your way, today. Father, Use me for your will, today.”

IN EVERY DECISION: “Lord, Lead me to find and follow your path”

AT EVERY OBSTACLE: “Lord, Reveal to me, your plan. Open to me, your will. I surrender to You. More than anything else, Lead me – Show me – Use me.”

Rom 8:14 ESV For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

God leads His children. The question is are we interested in following? The Lord leads us in paths of righteousness for his names sake. (Ps.23:3) Are we as sheep, seeking to follow and obey our Good Shepherd?

You will not discover God’s will for your life; You will never experience God’s calling in your life if we continue along through life, as we always have – doing our own thing – following our own path – pursuing our own desires. In fact those who live like that, cast a shadow of suspicion on their own spiritual life, because God’s word states – as though attempting to help us distinguish between false and genuine believers in Jesus – “*All who are led by the Spirit of God, are sons of God.*” As though to also imply, those who are NOT being led by the Spirit of God but by their own desires, may NOT be true believers in Jesus Christ.

“But what about new believers – those young in the faith – who are imperfect and still a work in progress?” I’d say sure. Those people are a work in progress. But I’d also say, we need to quite looking for excuses, for those of us who are decades old in the faith and still have yet to walk this path of surrender, obedience and personal Sacrifice before God. Jesus Himself, pursued and submitted to His Father’s will and calling.

“I have glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work You gave me to do.” ---Jesus (Jn.17:4)

That was in a sense, Jesus’ epitaph. What do you want written on your grave stone? If your motto doesn’t already characterize the way you live, then don’t bother putting it on your gravestone when you’re dead.

God’s calling for your life is for today. God’s calling and will for your life is God focused! Obey today. Surrender today. Follow and Serve Today. And if by His grace He gives us one more day, then we are one more day down the path of sacrificially serving Christ, surrendered to His leading and His purpose, and experiencing His calling in our lives. But without surrender and obedience today, we will not experience God’s will or discover His calling for tomorrow.

At the end of his life, the Apostle Paul was able to say, “I have fought the fight and I have finished the race.” (2Tim.4:7)

What do you want put on your gravestone? Then live that way today! Because whatever someone puts on your gravestone, changes nothing about the way you lived.

DRAWING NEARER TO MY CALLING

This is in the area of sacrificial service, in the context of the local church. We might define our calling as the specific purpose of God, for your personal life, for the kingdom of heaven. It might be described as a burden or deep focused desires; an unmovable, unquenchable sense of what you should be doing with your life. A calling might refer to a purpose or direction; a task or even a place.

God's calling is not for 2027 or next year or next month. God's calling is for you **TODAY**. Discovering God's calling in 10 years, involves pursuing and obeying God's known will for you TODAY.

This involves Sacrificial Service in some area of Ministry in the local church. ***Connecting with my spiritual giftedness*** and somehow serving the Lord, alongside other believing Christians.

The Calling of God is as much a "burden" on the soul of a servant, as it is an eternal purpose and ordained plan of God's selection process. God calls different people, in different ways, to different places. His plan is not only to reach the lost, but also to reach and form the missionary heart and spirit in His children. Sensing God's call to go around the world, may be as much to affect your life as it is to reach the people, whom you feel God is calling you to reach.

GOD'S GENERAL PLAN FOR ALL PEOPLE

Drawing Nearer to God involves understanding God's general plan for all people. It nurtures God's purpose for my Christian life and service. Every person has a personal, individual, tailor fitted, and custom made purpose through which God desires to use you for His eternal kingdom plan.

All People

1) Dominion

Gen 1:26-27 ESV Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ***And let them have dominion*** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (27) So God created man in his own image,

in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Dominion implies rule; governing; to care for or to exercise authority over some thing or some person.

2) Walk with God

Mic 6:8 ESV He has told you, O man, what is good; and **what does the LORD require of you** but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

This refers to God's purpose being for all mankind to walk humbly with God.

3) Repent from Sins

Act 17:30-31 ESV The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now **he commands all people everywhere** to repent, (31) because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

God calls all people, in all places, to repent from their sin and turn to Him in faith.

All Believers

Eph 2:8-10 ESV For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. [or accomplish them] [note: Titus 2:14; 3:8]

Drawing Nearer to My Calling involves Sacrificial Service in some area of Church Ministry – ***Connecting with my spiritual giftedness***. This may involve giving of my time, energy and resources. This is focused on giving of yourself first to the Lord, then serving in some area of ministry involvement.

This involves volunteering regularly for areas of Christian service within the church family, activities and leadership opportunities. This is taking on responsibilities that are needed for the inner and outer workings of the church ministries and needs. These are things God expects of each and every believing Christian, that is good works, which he has prepared before, for you to be involved in.

GOD’S SPECIFIC CALLING

Drawing Nearer to Your Calling, involves seeking God’s specific calling for me in Christian service and ministry. God’s plan for me and my interest, obedience and pursuit of that calling.

The Communicated Will of God

The specific will and calling of God in a person’s life, may or may not be clearly communicated to us by God. It may be revealed to us in pieces, or fulfilled in our lives in stages. Abraham did not know where he was going or what God would do or how.

Ignorance is a necessary part of faith. Walking by faith may mean, knowing where God is taking you, but not knowing How He will accomplish this? It may also mean, being confident that God is at work leading you and using you, but presently unsure as to where, or when that will be?

Reach the world for Christ

This seems to be the general call of God upon the life of every believer in Christ.

Mat 28:18-20 ESV And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

We may know generally that God wants to use you to reach the lost, but how He plans to use you may be a mystery. Where he wants to use you may remain for a time, a mystery. While these are frustrating components of the calling of God, it is often a necessary component of allowing us to continue walking by faith, rather than knowing the end from the beginning, which is what I personally would prefer.

The Individual will and plan of God

Within the will and plan of God is the safest and best place to be, whether it is what we presently desire or not.

Eph 4:1-3 ESV I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, (3) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Live the life God has given you. Serve the Lord where He has put you. **Obey Here! Serve Now!** All others to see the life and calling of God in you – in all you do. God's Calling is the purpose of God, for the life of the Believer. It must be sought after and pursued with prayer and earnestness. It must be lived and

experienced. It must be submitted to and embraced. Remember: every step of obedience TODAY, Draws You Nearer to the overall plan and purpose and Will and calling of God in your future.

TAKING NEXT STEPS THROUGH SACRIFICIAL SERVICE

Drawing Nearer to My Calling involves taking the Next Steps in Drawing Nearer to My calling through Sacrificial Service. God's purpose for you is for your own good and His own glory.

Rom 8:28 ESV And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

We tend to remember this verse in the context of things going wrong in life, while experiencing a hardship. But this is in the context of God preparing and using a believer for His purposes and using trials to accomplish this. If we look at the following verses, we see that v.29 speaks of God's purpose being to conform each of us into the image of his Son, and v.30 assures us that all this is part of God's eternal calling in the life of one of His children; "those whom he predestined he also called...".

2Thes. 1:11-12 ESV To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, (12) so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The calling of God in our lives is not intended to make much of you, but to make much of God who has chosen to use you, in bringing honor and glory and praise to Christ.

A Model to follow

The book of Acts gives us a model to follow in the calling of the recent convert, Saul. In Acts 11:30, Saul and Barnabas took a collection from the church in Antioch to the church in need in Judea. In 12: 25 we see that these two traveled and ministered together. Then in chapter 13, we see a model to follow for the Biblical process of a person sensing and/or receiving their calling from God. It is within the context of the local church congregation.¹

Act 13:1-4 ESV Now there were in the church² at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (2) While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit³ said, ⁴"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (3) Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off⁵. (4) So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

We see Saul and Barnabas ¹actively serving sacrificially in the church community, not idle, but actively serving, growing, developing in your local church context. And this all occurred ²in the context of the church family.

³The Holy Spirit “said”; impressed, moved, deeply and confidently made clear to them. The church was able to observe their abilities, their heart and passion; their devotion, giftedness, and even the Holy Spirit’s empowering, filling and using them. The church observed their faithfulness, and abilities and acknowledged their calling. The Church identified their calling and commissioned them for special service.

This is presented as the Holy Spirit communicating very clearly, not just to one or two people, but to the church as a whole. This is an important element in these men receiving their calling. They were not depending merely on an inner feeling, though God often works that way. Feelings or perceptions about one's self can often be inaccurate or misinterpreted due to emotions, desires or other contributing factors. But in the presence of the church as a whole, their calling is observed, identified, communicated, commissioned and received.

⁴This was a special and Individual call upon Barnabas and Saul. At this point, the call is not specific or at least the specifics are not recorded for us here. ⁵ Nevertheless, they went. The Church Commissioned them and sent them off for their assignment. Then the local church sent them out.

I think sometimes well-meaning people are so caught up and consumed with sensing God's personal calling in their lives, that they waste the present proving ground for their faith, and the opportunity for the church family to observe, acknowledge, commission and send them out on assignment – thus experiencing the Biblical means whereby missionaries in Scripture, received their calling.

When referring to His ordained calling by His Heavenly Father, Jesus could confidently state:

<p>Joh 17:4 ESV I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.</p>

A Promise to hold to and persevere under

One encouraging passage is in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. We may become overly concerned or frustrated in regard to our calling or

the clarity of it. Be we needn't be. If we viewed it correctly, we might see that the majority of the responsibility is on God's shoulders, not ours.

1Th 5:24 ESV He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

God – who calls us – is faithful! HE (who is responsible for calling us) – will “do it” or perform His will in you and fulfill His calling in your life. We don't have to be able to see the future, but we must learn to walk by faith. WE don't have to have all the answers or know “the end from the beginning”, because He does. It is HIS plan. It is HIS calling upon us. It is HIS plan and purpose that HE is working out in our lives. And not only does HE call us, but it is HE who works it all out and accomplishes that calling in us.

CONCLUSION / ASSIGNMENT:

Psa 73:28 MKJV And I, it is good for me to **DRAW NEAR** to God; I have put my trust in Jehovah God, to declare all Your works.

I'd like to think that every single person here today, is genuinely interested in doing what it takes to take that next step toward Drawing Nearer to God, even though, it will most certainly cost us all something.

Q: Some have questioned whether or not it is worth it to lay aside your own ideas and dreams and submit to God's plan and calling? After all it is most likely not what you had in mind.

Q: Is surrendering to your Heavenly Father, and offering your humble obedience and giving glory to His name worth it? Indeed it is! So we make it our goal to be submitted to Him in order for Him to use us, direct us, and work through us for His glorious plan and purpose. We call that OUR “calling”, but really it is God's calling. It is HE who calls and HE who communicates and steers us toward

HIS intended goals for us. So we **Obey NOW!** And we **Serve HERE!** until He communicates specifically or directs us differently.

Below are some suggestions as we are Taking the Next Step toward Drawing Nearer to My Calling Through Sacrificial Service.

MY STEPS GOD'S PLAN

¹Put God First! **INTENTIONALLY!** See Him. Pursue Him. Draw Near to God through deeper Intimacy.

²Love God Best! Love Him above all other things; all other people; above all other dreams.

³Desire God Most! Our greatest desires determine our choices and things we pursue.

⁴Trust God

Pro 3:5-6 ESV Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Trust God even if you can't figure out His plan or clearly discern His will. Don't trust in our own understanding or ability to figure it all out ahead of time. Do not depend on our own interpretation of leading, life and ministry, but in all my ways Acknowledge Him in the present and for the future.

⁵Get Involved Locally! **Obey NOW! Serve HERE!**

Involvement. Participation. Sacrificial Service for Christ in the context of your home church family. And if you don't have one, then you need to get one.

Drawing Nearer to your calling through sacrificial service.
Drawing Nearer to the Church through frequent fellowship.
Drawing Nearer to the Lost through passionate Outreach. Drawing
Nearer to God through deeper Intimacy. This is what Drawing
Nearer is all about. This is the end of the “Drawing Nearer” series,
but only the beginning of the year-long focus for our church
family.

DRAWING NEARER TO GOD Deeper Intimacy

DRAWING NEARER TO THE CHURCH through Frequent Fellowship

DRAWING NEARER TO THE LOST through Passionate Outreach

DRAWING NEARER TO MY CALLING through Sacrificial Service

Taking the next steps toward a deeper level of spiritual maturity,
evidenced by higher quality of Christ-like character.



“DRAWING NEARER”

WHATEVER IT TAKES!

WHEREVER IT TAKES US!

Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior of *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
--Rom 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come
from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should
not perish, but have everlasting life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him
to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of
Jesus Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were
still sinners, Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his
name, he gave the right to become children of God,
- John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you
are truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins
and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

*It is our prayer that you find **Jesus Christ** to be...
your highest calling,
your greatest purpose,
your soul's source and joy,
and your all-consuming passion.*

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May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

--- Downloadable free resources at: www.christefca.org --

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