

As a Church we have embraced 7 core values: Biblically faithful, spiritually passionate, grace oriented, family affirming, community focused, missionally motivated (2011), and people developing.

People Developing: We seek to help people grow spiritually and to learn how to be a committed disciple of Jesus. We encourage believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to both discover and use their spiritual gifts. We stress healthy relationships and emphasize small groups and ministry teams (also spiritual coaching-follow) as the primary means for us to grow in Christ, care for each other, develop friendships, and share our lives. Our goal is total life transformation!

In next few months we will be focusing on two powerful words. The first powerful word is SANCTIFICATION. The second powerful word is PRAYER. (Fall Spiritual Life Focus – Oct./Nov. (small groups)

SANCTIFICATION!

1 Thessalonians 4:3 *“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified...”*

What does this mean? If this is God’s will, how does it happen? What does it look like in our lives? If we read on in 1 Thessalonians, we see "applied sanctification." *“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn how to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.”*

That's not the message the Thessalonian believers were hearing from their culture, nor is it the message of popular culture today, but it is God's Word so we need to deal with it because the opinions of mankind will always be changing to reflect the mood of the day; whereas God's Word is established. He determines what is true and what is not true. **And have you noticed that He doesn't ask our opinion?**

So, let's look at this word, which we are told is God's will for us. The word "*sanctification*" comes from the same root word as the word "*holy*." **It has the idea of separation from evil and sin, by attachment to God.** It calls us to become more like Jesus; less like our selfish selves, and less like our world. It's a word that calls us (poster) to our **potential**, to **progress**, to **purity** & to **power** - the power of the Holy Spirit changing us!

It also has the idea of choice (*avoid, learn*). We choose to cooperate with God and not cooperate with sin. The verb tense tells us that it is an ongoing process (*Keep on being sanctified*). How? It's accomplished by the blood of Jesus, the Word of God, and by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In short: Sanctification is the process in which we learn to live and function as God intended!

It's the process of becoming less like the devil and more like Jesus!

Do you know that Jesus prayed that you and I would be sanctified? ("*Sanctify them by your truth...*" John 17:17)

Some scriptures for you to read this week: John 17:17, Romans 15:16, Ephesians 5:26, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Hebrews 10:29, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:13

Here's the tension we live with: You and I are not what we once were, but we are not yet what we are going to be. What we are is still being worked on, yet we are acceptable to God because of the blood of Jesus Christ. God's Word and the Holy Spirit are shaping us as new people in Jesus. **We have great potential!**

Jesus has us covered. His righteousness covers us. That frees us to welcome Him to shape His potential and life in us!

The Temptation: To use statements like, "*Christians are not perfect, just forgiven.*" "*Be patient, God's not finished with me yet.*" as an excuse to avoid our need for transformation.

Great bumper stickers! Right? But only half the truth.

The temptation is to use statements like that as an excuse for living like the devil! And then we can get **stuck** there; live a defeated life and stop growing. Have you ever got stuck?

The Challenge: To allow God's Word and God's Spirit to keep on changing us to be more like Jesus. Jesus lived a life that made a huge difference. Amen? Our lives also have great potential. We can make a difference for God in our family, community and world if we allow Christ to be formed in us. Before we talk about what that looks like, let's talk about what that doesn't look like.

In 1 Samuel 9 – 31 we read the story of King Saul. From that story we learn that this man had some amazing encounters with the Holy Spirit. He was anointed. God's Spirit came on him with great power. He prophesied and was changed by God's Spirit into a different person. He even had an experience where God's power came on him so intensely that all day and night he laid in the dirt and prophesied. At one time he was passionate for God and depended upon God.

Yet this man allowed the old spirit of Saul to take over his life again – the spirit of jealousy, spirit of control, spirit of pride, the spirit of anger and the spirit of fear. He covered and excused his sins. He turned away from pursuing God, allowing lust and hate to control his life. He even sought out the counsel of a witch.

Yet, in his own eyes; Saul justified his behavior. He refused to inquire of God or seek counsel from God; rather he wanted to use God to advance his own agenda and his own kingdom.

Recently I've been reading through 1 Kings and these phrases kept grabbing my attention, *“But in God's view he was an evil king, as far as God was concerned, in God's eyes, etc.”*

The truth there is that it doesn't matter how we view something, the question is: “How does God see this?”

Saul believed his own press reports. He had a view of himself that was exalted. God saw it all differently. **Listen: This is not about the Holy Spirit condemning us. This is about the Holy Spirit teaching us. How teachable are you?**

One aspect of sanctification is the process of learning to think about things the way God thinks about them. Have you noticed that as you walk with Jesus, read God's Word and listen to the Holy Spirit that you find yourself thinking about things in a different way? **P** Why is that happening? It's God's will!

Answer: You are meant to become more like Jesus as you walk with Him! And less like your sinful self!

Every one of us has many forces that influence our lives: heredity, culture, environment, circumstances, education, family, friends, etc. You choose; will those forces become the most powerful influencers in your life or will Jesus be first? **P**

We can learn what King Saul was unwilling to learn – obedience. Obedience is yielding to the Holy Spirit and to God's Word. It is cooperating by turning away from self-centered living to Christ-centered living. Why? **Because the self life cannot produce the Christ-life!**

Life can't be all about you and getting your way, and all about Jesus and his will at the same time. **There's only room for one in the driver's seat!**

Last Sunday my wife and I watched the movie: "A Mother's Courage – The Mary Thomas Story. The movie tells their family story about growing up in Chicago and how Mary fought for her family. It also tells the growing up story of her one son Isaiah Thomas, who now plays basketball for the Sacramento Kings. **Isaiah had a lot of ball handling skills, but he had**

learned how to play ball his own way, just like all of us learned how to live life our own way.

In order to grow in the potential he had in basketball, he had to **learn** how to be a team player. To do that he had to **learn** how to listen to and cooperate with his coach.

The Holy Spirit is somewhat like that coach. The Holy Spirit calls us to turn away from sin and to give up our own way and learn God's way; to learn how to live in harmony with God's will and develop our God-given potential. To learn how to play on God's team, God's way!

That means that rather than saying: "Hey, this is just the way I am. *What's the harm in _____ (fill in blank). I was born this way. This is just my culture.*"

That was King Saul's attitude and he lost his potential, his position, his power and his influence.

You see, the question is not, "*What's the harm in _____, or What's wrong with _____?*" The question is: "*Lord Jesus, how do you view this? How do you think about this?*" Not how my friends or culture think, but how my God thinks!

In the next few months we are going to look at the whole picture of sanctification – our potential, purity, progress, power. And my prayer is we will see how practical in terms of life application, and life potential, this truth is. And that we will see that sanctification is not just about what you don't do, but it is also about what you do!

- A heart that's responsive to God.
- Becoming an encourager.
- Growing a praising attitude.
- Building a reputation of being trustworthy.
- Developing a heart of integrity.
- Excelling in our work. Etc.

I want to be everything Jesus planned for me because his plans are the best plans and his way is the best way! **Amen?**
 However, that will mean turning away from our way.

Question: What do you know about yourself?

How does the enemy trap you, rob you, destroy your potential, hold you back, drain your spiritual power, and pollute the purity of Jesus in your life? It's wise to know that about yourself!

The Greek philosophers said, "*Know thyself.*" There is a percentage of truth in that statement, but just knowing myself is only part of my need.

My greatest need and your greatest need is to get to know Jesus better!

King Saul had numerous encounters with the Holy Spirit, but his God moments did not produce a godly difference. He remained a man who would stay in charge and run the show.

Everyone's life makes a difference – one way or the other. Your life can make a difference for God, or you can live for self!

Video: Amena Brown - Psalm 139

Prayer- soul searching