

011819

- I. My Notes.... WWC message 1/20
- II. Series: Let's Live
 - a. Title: Living a Full Life
 - b. Text: Matthew 7
 - c. Quote: "God will meet you where you are in order to take you where He wants you to go." –Tony Evans (Pastor, Author)
- III. Introduction
 - a. We are coming to the next step in our journey, as a family – as believers. One thing you get to do is follow along as the Lord directs me on the path for our Church. This series is wrapping up and I hope that we have learned some things about living – about our attitudes in living the life of a believer, about our prayer life, about being distinct, and celebrating all that the Lord God has done for us. I want to encourage you to stay the course, to continue to "walk worthy" of the calling each of us has, and to let our words and actions honor the Lord and speak to our faith.
 - b. I believe that now is the time to get back to basics. That means growing and understanding why you believe what you believe. Our recent journey has been about becoming more grounded in what we know. And finding ways to live it out, in everyday life. Faith, our relationship with the Lord God, is meant to change us – to make us different from the world. If everything in the world was right, if what is defined as normal life kept us in a right relationship (righteousness) with the Lord, then Jesus would have not needed to come. We would have not had the need for a Savior.
 - c. There is a lot that is right about what is going on with the body of Christ. I know a lot of groups (churches) that are beginning to focus on the community around

them instead of building a better program. As believers, we have been challenged to go – to live within the community – to love unconditionally. Let me ask, how many people listening (or reading) have friends that aren't believers? Are you involved with others that might not agree with your faith? It's important to have a support network that can encourage and strengthen you in your walk. We need to have those voices of reason and direction. But there is another side of the coin. We are tasked (ref. Matt. 28: 19-20) to "Go" and to "make disciples" (this requires building a relationship) and to "teach" the commands and precepts of Jesus (this requires our growth and understanding). Our life is filled with opportunities, adventure, beauty, and so much more... we need to live it to the fullest. That comes thru loving, respecting, and inspiring others to discover the grace and mercy that you and I have come to know.

- d. There are essential truths that we, as Christ-Followers, must know and agree on. Have you thought about them? Are there things, in your faith, that are non-negotiable? Let's lay them out... (1) God is self-existent, eternal, unchanging, holy, and loving unconditionally. There is One God in 3 distinct persons (the Trinity – Father-Son-Holy Spirit). (2) Scripture is the ultimate authority. This is saying that the Bible is inspired by God, infallible in communicating God's love for man and His intention for their life, and inerrant Word. It is the place where we find and gain knowledge about God, as well as the ultimate guide for daily life. (3) Man is both physical and spiritual in his existence (Man was created in the image of God). Depravity (original sin) caused our separation from God and sin inhibits our fellowship with Him. (4) Jesus Christ came to earth, was born of a virgin, lived, suffered, died on the Cross, was resurrected, returned to Heaven, and will one day return to deliver the Church. (5) Salvation comes through Grace alone (Sola Gratia). We are drawn to a relationship with the Lord God because of grace and saved by His Grace... {There may be other ways to say this}.
- e. I'm changing the title of the message today. Originally, I thought that I would tell you to "Don't Stop Believin'" ... I want to encourage that in your day and your life.

But I want to bring out some thoughts about how we can become more effective in our relationship with others and with the Lord.

IV. Don't Stop Being Kind

a. Matthew 7:1-2 (CSB)

"Do not judge, so that you won't be judged. For you will be judged by the same standard with which you judge others, and you will be measured by the same measure you use. "

- b. Many are so quick to throw out the "do not judge" phrase. It may be because they want to do what they want – it's selfishness
- c. The term "judge" comes from the same word as "condemn" (Greek, *kree-no*). Judgement is assigning spiritual condemnation – that's God's job, not ours.
- d. It's the job of a believer to stand on the truth – to live it out as consistently as possible – and to love others despite the differences we have.
- e. Kindness, gentleness, are very possible stands to take without compromise the standards which believers must (do their best to) live by
- f. We want fairness in our lives. We want understanding and forgiveness
- g. So, we must be willing to exhibit those characteristics in the way we live and relate to others.
- h. Jesus told His Disciples, He told those listening, to stop looking at the problems in the life of others and be concerned about the issues in our own lives. (cf. vs. 3-5)
- i. Harsh attitudes and actions don't reveal God's love and compassion to those who are searching for truth.

V. Don't Stop Looking

a. Matthew 7:7 (CSB)

"Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you.

b. This is about the intensity of our pursuit of our relationship with the Lord.

c. Equate "asking" to prayer – "seeking" to the choices and actions we show and display as a demonstration of our faith and love for the Lord God – "knocking" as our desire to enter "the Father's House".

d. There are movements within Christianity that would say that, if you ask -with adequate faith- God will give you a blue Cadillac. Not so

e. It isn't about our want, yet God has promised to supply all that we need (ref. Phil. 4:19)

f. We were created for fellowship (relation, connection) with God and with others. In fact, when Adam and Eve sinned and hid, God called them to come out of hiding and find forgiveness. Even after missing the mark the Lord still sought a relationship.

g. Psalm 105:4 (NLT2)

Search for the LORD and for his strength; continually seek him.

** The psalmist is telling believers that pursuing a relationship with the Lord honors Him – in remembering His love and grace we find our purpose and wholeness

h. Seek – we are reaching out, searching, for the Lord because He first reached out (loved) us. The only true wholeness that will be found is in an authentic bond with Him

i. John Piper (Pastor, Author) has said, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. If we are not satisfied with our life, then God is not being glorified in us."

j. If our life is about bringing glory and honor to the Lord, then we must find satisfaction (contentment) in our life and relationship with Him

k. Hebrews 13:5 (CSB)

Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you.

** The focus we have should not be on worldly possessions. It's not about the things we have or acquire. It's about building a real relationship with the Lord and then living it out – each day.

l. Ask, seek, knock and find the ultimate peace and joy we long for

VI. Don't Stop Trying

a. Back in 2004, I read the passage in Ephesians that began the foundation of this ministry

b. Ephesians 4:1-3 (NASB)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

c. The Apostle Paul is writing to the "saints" of the Church. He is writing to you and I about how we are supposed to live. Our choice is to walk, to live, to behave in a that glorifies the Lord and demonstrates that we understand we have a ministry – that the way we live demonstrates our need for God.

d. Every person is a minister of the Good News (the Gospel). Most wear different hats... Mom, Employee, Coach, Patient.... Wherever we are we can show God's love and grace.

- e. The way we show this – we show our ministry starts with demonstrating humility (it's not about me), continues in gentleness (strength in our stand and faith), follows with patience (not being in a rush for results), loving others (it's a choice), and building unity – not divisiveness and disruption. This brings peace
- f. Believers are challenged to take what they have learned in their pursuit of the Lord and translate it into practical action.
- g. Faith is about living, faith is about giving, faith is about trusting and loving in real ways
- h. In this part of our text, Jesus stated that the gate on the path believers walk is narrow and few will find it. Life is filled with distractions and issues that can pull us off course.
- i. We must remain focused on the Lord – it's what brings change, transformation, a better and peaceful path.
- j. You know this passage... “So brothers and sisters, since God has shown us great mercy, I beg you to offer your lives as a living sacrifice to him. Your offering must be only for God and pleasing to him, which is the spiritual way for you to worship. Do not change yourselves to be like the people of this world, but be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you; you will know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect.” (Rom. 12:1-2 NCV)
- k. Actions result from what we have learned
- l. And living our faith honors God and testifies to all.

VII. Don't Stop Trusting

- a. One of my favorite quotes is “If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything” (Peter Marshall, Presbyterian Preacher)
- b. 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (CSB)

Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong. Do everything in love.

- c. Our solid foundation is the Lord
- d. No matter what
- e. Feeling weak, Jesus overcame it all (ref. John 16:33)
- f. Doubt, there is an answer (ref. Prov. 3:5-6, James 1:6, Jude 1:22)
- g. Hurt, there is healing (cf. Ps. 34:18)
- h. Wisdom is gained as we grow in grace. 2 Peter 3:18 states, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity." (CSB)
- i. Understanding Grace is the key. We are saved, justified, sanctified, and will be glorified because of God's marvelous grace.
- j. Jesus said that it is wise to build a foundation on His words and teachings. We will be able to weather the storms and struggles life brings

VIII. Final Words

- a. In his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*, Ronald Sider makes a poignant case for the fact that most people who profess to be Christians today live lives that are not significantly different from the world around them. Sider quotes Evangelical theologian Michael Horton who says, "Survey after survey demonstrates that evangelical Christians are as likely to embrace lifestyles every bit as hedonistic, materialistic, self-centered and sexually immoral as the world in general." "Divorce," says Sider, "is more common among born again Christians than in the general American population. Only 6 percent of evangelicals tithe and White evangelicals are the most likely people to object to neighbors of another race. Noted Christian apologist Josh McDowell has pointed out that sexual promiscuity of evangelical

youth is only a little less outrageous than that of their non-evangelical peers." (taken from lifeway.com/en/articles/)

- b. Whether you agree or not, I have learned that much of what was said is accurate. Life is hard and it seems that most Christians struggle with their lives on Earth. The issues that trouble people in the World have permeated the Church
- c. It's time to get back to the basics. To build relationships (with God and others), to learn and understand what Scripture says, to stand firm in our faith, and to share the experiences we have had due to our relationship with the Lord God
- d. Let's Pray
- e. May you find your strength in God's unconditional love and acceptance. May grace guide you as you grow into the fullness of His plan for you. And may His glory shine on you as your life continues to honor Him.