

Daily Devotional Guide

Monday – Read Colossians 3:15. After being told to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts we are encouraged to be thankful. Being thankful is one of the ways to bring peace to our lives. As one author put it, “When we appreciate the good in our lives, the good appreciates.” When our minds and souls are focused on the good things, those good things have a way of overshadowing the bad. Make a list of what you are thankful for today. What good things are happening in your life?

Tuesday – Read Colossians 3:16. This verse reminds us of one of the best ways we can perpetuate a grateful attitude in ourselves – with music! Music has a way of getting into our hearts in a way that nothing else can. Why do we think we sing every Sunday in worship? Is there a favorite praise song or hymn that you could hum or sing throughout the day? Try beginning your day with this music and listening to it in your car. It helps to keep things in perspective and reminds us that God is with us wherever we go. I’m always singing a positive song. Just ask the staff!

Wednesday – Read Colossians 3:17. We are reminded again at the end of this verse to give thanks to God. I believe this text is trying to tell us something! In fact, this verse goes so far as to say that whatever we are doing in our lives we should be giving thanks to God. Someone once said that if there is only one prayer we could offer God, “Thank you, Lord,” would be enough. Gratitude to God has a way of drawing us closer to God’s will and love. Gratitude puts us in tune with the movement of God in our lives. Try it. You will see.

Thursday – One of the things I do to remind me to have an “attitude of gratitude” is keep a big coin in my pocket. This big coin was a gift from a friend. I always keep it in my right side pocket, and whenever I go into my pocket to get my keys or wallet it reminds me to think of something to thank God for. You may want to try it. It certainly works for me.

Friday – I would like for you to consider doing something at the end of each day that will really transform your life. I do this before I go to bed each night and what a difference it makes! Get a journal and write down 5 things or people you are thankful to God for during the day. It doesn’t have to be a long journal entry; just name them. Then write down how you saw God at work in your life during the day. Again, it doesn’t have to be long, just a sentence or two. It could be an answer to a prayer or a lesson that God is teaching you. There is no better way to end the day. Try it for a week and see if it doesn’t make a difference to you!



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~ Living the Dream ~ The Key to Changing Your Life

Sunday, January 9, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Colossians 3:15-17

I remember lending out a book to someone in another church I served. When she returned it, I looked through it and discovered the letters Y.B.H. on the margin of a page. I continued to flip through the book and there the letters were again, Y.B.H. In fact, these letters were found throughout the book. Well, I was very curious. So, the next time I saw the lady who borrowed the book, I asked her, “Well, did you like the book?” “Oh yeah! It was great!” she replied. Then I asked, “Please tell me, is there any significance to the letters, Y.B.H.?” She responded, “Oh sure. Again, great book. But every so often I kept asking the question, ‘Yes, but how?’”

That event forced me to go back to sermon notes. We preachers have the tendency to give a lot of whys and whats and whos, but often times we leave out the HOW. So, today I am going to give you the HOW to living the dream. I’m going to tell you how to live the abundant life. A sermon is no good unless it has a handle on it.

So, how does the life of your dreams begin? How can you change your life and live with joy, meaning, and fulfillment? I’m going to give you the key to opening up the abundant life. This key has taken many folks a whole lifetime to obtain. Many have gone through much suffering to find this key. But it does not have to be that way for you. You can have it today!

I hand you the key today through a true story. Recently a friend of mine sat in my office. He had lost a lot of weight, and he looked much different. It all started several months back when he became very depressed. He was struggling with his job. His wife was threatening to leave him. He had mounting debt. They were about to foreclose on his house. To make matters worse, he developed a rare disease that left him almost paralyzed and he was forced into the hospital for several days.

While he was in the hospital, he did a lot of thinking and praying and he discovered God again. He also became aware of all the friends he had in his life.

Fortunately, my friend recovered and he came to see me in my office. I prayed with him and, as I prayed, he squeezed my hand so tight I thought he was going to squeeze it off. When I finished praying, there were tears in his eyes. He looked up at me and said, “I’ve found the key to life. I don’t know why it took me so long to learn it. The key is to be grateful, not angry.” He was right.

The key to changing your life is an attitude of gratitude. An attitude of gratitude is appreciating the good things in your life and giving thanks to God for all the blessings in your life. Isn’t this what the Bible tells us to do? In our text for today we are admonished to give thanks in everything we do – to be grateful to God. This is one of the reasons we come to church and sing hymns and say prayers. We know there is power, healing power in gratitude.

The more we appreciate the good in our life the more good appreciates and overshadows the bad things in our life. An attitude of gratitude is like a magnet that pulls in the power and guidance of God into our lives. What’s more is that an attitude of gratitude gives us a better disposition, more joy, more energy, and is just plain healthy. There have been medical studies that have proven the healing power of gratitude. Abe Lincoln was right when he said, “People are about as happy as they make up their mind to be.” There is power in a grateful thought!

Allow me to give some things to be grateful for. If you begin with these things you are guaranteed to be happy.

Be Grateful For Yourself

You will never find happiness and joy until you

appreciate yourself – until you like yourself and are grateful for who God made you to be.

Back in the 80's there was a popular song sung by Whitney Houston entitled "The Greatest Love of All." It is a beautiful song. Some of the lyrics are, "The greatest love of all is easy to achieve. Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all." Why is this the greatest love of all? Learning to love yourself is learning to see yourself the way God sees you.

Saint Bernard lived hundreds of years ago. He was a very wise man. He took all of the lessons he had learned about faith and life and summed them up through what he called the four stages of spiritual growth. Here they are. You may find them surprising.

Love of Self for Self's Sake
Love of God for Self's Sake
Love of God for God's Sake
Love of Self for God's Sake

Isn't that amazing? The final stage of spiritual growth is loving yourself the way God loves you!

I remember a young lady in another church I served. She was active in the youth group and was president of everything in school. She got wonderful grades and everyone was so proud of her. She got into the college of her choice and I kept up with her by email. I will never forget an email she sent me that said, "Pastor Charley, I've just made the most important decision of my life." She went on to tell me what happened. She and her friends were invited to a fraternity party off campus. They were not sure about going, but there was going to be a guy at the party that she really liked so they decided to go.

They drove to the party. It was on a farm and there was big bonfire with lots of beer. She saw the guy she liked and he came up to her and started to talk to her. She was so excited. After a few minutes, he opened up his hand and there were a few marijuana joints. He said to her, "Why don't you come off with me and we will smoke these?" She wrote, "I really wanted to do it because I liked this guy, but I knew it was wrong." "Then," she wrote, "Suddenly I felt a presence come over me. It felt like there was someone above me. I knew it was Jesus. He said, 'Don't do that. You're worth more than that.'" She then wrote, "I didn't do it. God loves me too much and I love myself too much to do that." And she left the party early. She concluded the email by saying, "I've never been happier. I'm so proud of my decision."

Happiness is found in knowing your worth and being grateful for who you are. Happiness is found in making choices out of the knowledge that you matter to God. Someone once said that "The greatest thing that can happen is to be able to look yourself in the mirror and like what you see." Here is a poem that tells us how

to find happiness:

The Man in the Glass

When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man has to say

For it isn't your father, mother, or wife, whose judgment
upon you must pass
The person whose verdict counts most is the one staring
at you in the glass

Some people may think you are a straight shootin' chum
and call you a wonderful guy
But the person in the glass doesn't think much if you
can't look him in the eye

He's the person to please, never mind the rest, for He's
with you clear up to the end
And you've passed the most dangerous difficult test, if
the man in the glass is your friend

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of life
And get pats on your back as you pass
But your final reward will be heartache and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass

-Dale Winbrow, Sr.

Be Grateful For The People In Your Life

Appreciate the people in your life. Life is so precious, so it is important to be grateful for people. We human beings are strange creatures. So often we hurt the ones closest to us.

A colleague tells of going to his doctor for a check-up. He and his doctor were friends. After the examination was over, the doctor took off his stethoscope and said, "Now, will you examine me? I've got to get something off my chest that is bothering me." My colleague said, "Sure. What is on your mind?" He went on to talk about his only daughter who just went through a bitter divorce. He said that they had so much promise when they first got married. But he mentioned that the last two years they were married he never heard them compliment each other. He always heard them talk about one another's faults. He said to my colleague, "I think it could have made difference. If they could have looked for something to appreciate about each other, they might still be married and happy."

There is much truth in what that troubled doctor had to say. Appreciating the people in your life can heal wounds and bridge a gulf of dissension. Choosing to see the good in others can keep the loving force alive in otherwise destructive situation.

I've learned that criticism does not do any good. Our culture puts a high value on criticism but all it does is make things worse. Let's face it. How do you feel when someone comes up to you and asks, "Can I give

you some constructive criticism?" None of us look forward to those conversations. And we usually leave those conversations feeling bad about ourselves. Criticism does not do any good. But honest appreciation works like magic. In fact, honest appreciation can change lives.

Several years ago, in Detroit, there was a little boy the name of Stevie Morris. He found himself in a classroom one day. A little mouse got loose in classroom and all the kids jumped on their desks and started to scream. The teacher asked Stevie to help her find the mouse, since he had such remarkable ears. He had exceptional hearing because he was blind. It was the first time anyone had shown appreciation for Stevie. The teacher would have no idea the ripple effect of that appreciation. Stevie went on to develop his hearing and became pretty well known. Maybe you have heard of him? Stevie Wonder?

Who do you appreciate? Give thanks to them and tell them thanks. You never know what a difference it will make.

Be Grateful For Jesus Christ

We have experienced lots of loss this week. We have had five funerals this week. All of these folks were special people to us and we miss them dearly. I was drinking punch at one of the funeral receptions when Bill Rahter, our head usher, came up to me shaking his head saying, "Charley, I don't know how people who don't Jesus and the church handle death." I agree with him. I don't how people do it, either.

I got an email from a special lady in our church who attended the funerals. She asked if I would tell her where she could find that passage I always read at funerals. She said it was so comforting and she wanted to read it. She was referring to John 14:1-4. In that passage Jesus is speaking to his disciples in the upper room. He says to them, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Our world tries to manufacture peace, but Jesus is the only one who can produce peace in our lives.

Norman Vincent Peale remembers going to hear a famous intellectual speak at First Baptist Church of Syracuse, New York. The speaker said something that shocked Peale. He said, "I've never been discouraged the last 25 years of my life!"

Peale said that he could not dismiss him as a crank or a nut because he was this famous intellectual. In fact, he was a patron saint of Methodism. His name

was E. Stanley Jones. He was a missionary to India, and his job was to convert the intellectuals of India to Christ. He was brilliant.

That night Jones went on to say that the reason he had never been discouraged is that he had discovered a simple workable secret. He said he was trying to carry everything himself which is why he had two nervous breakdowns. One night while praying in a church service he felt Jesus say to him, "Look Stanley, are you ready to turn your life over to me? Just give it to me and I will give you peace, health, energy, and a great life." Jones said he did it right then and he was never the same.

You want to change your life? Be grateful for Christ and what he has done for you. Give your life over to him. If you have given your life over to him then remember that Christ is in charge. Be grateful for his power in your life and use it.

So, there you have it. An attitude of gratitude is the key to changing your life. You have homework tonight. Go home and write down five things you are grateful to God for in your life. Do this every night before you go to bed and you will never be the same. Try it. But only try it if you want to find joy. Amen.