

Welcome to New Life !

We are very pleased you are here. It is an honor to have you as our guest today! This information is provided to help you feel welcome and "at home."

Worship in Singing & Giving

- We leave how to worship up to you as an individual. During **singing** worship some people remain seated, some stand, others kneel, many clap, and some lift their hands. The outward expression is not the issue - it is what is in your heart that counts. Just relax and enjoy the presence of God.
- If you would like to receive personal **prayer** during worship with singing, you may go to one of the Prayer Teams located at the back of the sanctuary.
- Invitation is given for **tithes and offerings**. If you are our guest, please do not feel obligated to contribute when God's tithes and offerings are received.

Worship in Sharing God's Love

Expressions of greeting and God's love are extended to all, especially to our guests.

Worship in Meditating on God's Word

Teaching from the Bible for about 35 minutes.

We encourage you to use our **staffed Nursery** [which has a private nursing room] and **Children's Churches** during the service. Please ask an usher for assistance in locating the various rooms.

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Pastor Chris Puccini

January 11, 2009

- STRENGTHENING YOUR JOURNEY, Part 1 -

The spiritual window shopper is exploring Christianity and the main figure of it all -- Jesus.

God uses various things in the life of an explorer ...if you are exploring Christ, God is at work in you!

John 6:44a ESV "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him ..."

Catalyst ~ "something that causes or promotes *change*"

"Beliefs and practices that help spiritual window shoppers move forward into a relationship with God"

1. SALVATION BY **GRACE** (Spiritual Belief/Attitude)

Ephesians 2:8-9 AMP "For it is by free grace (God's unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ's salvation) through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [of your own doing, it came not through your own striving], but it is the gift of God; Not because of works [not the fulfillment of the Law's demands], lest any man should boast."

- **Salvation** – being completely forgiven and accepted into God's family.
- **Grace** – getting something you do not deserve by an act of God's love.
- Grasping the concept of grace, deep inside, will be one of the most powerful things in your life.

YOU WILL NEVER BE GOOD ENOUGH

- God never intended for you to earn His love, His acceptance.
 - Have you wrongly thought that taking the next step in your journey with God required you to first become worthy?
 - Somehow we think that external religious behavior will produce spiritual passion... when it's the other way around.
- John 3:6 NIV** "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."
- Grace is the most catalytic belief for those exploring Christ.
 - Let's not lose sight of our target -- our purpose.

Digging Deeper

For personal or small group study

Week of January 11, 2009

Ephesians 4:13-14a; 15-16 NIV "... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants... Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

2. THE TRINITY (Spiritual Belief/Attitude)

Deuteronomy 6:4 NIV "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

Matthew 28:19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

- Not three gods ...**One God**.
- The crux of Christianity is that Jesus died the death of a guilty sinner as our substitute.
- In His trial, we find Jesus claiming to be God:

Mark 14:61b-62 "Then the high priest asked him, "Are you the **Messiah**, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "**I Am**. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."

- The truth is that Jesus – fully God, fully man – is the expression of God's grace (undeserved favor).

3. SERVING THE CHURCH (Church Activity)

- If you are exploring Christ, you need to get involved serving.

Ephesians 2:10 NIV "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

- If serving in the church is one of the top catalysts to move from exploring to growing, how should this shape your attitude?

4. PRAYER TO SEEK GUIDANCE (Spiritual Practice)

- If you are exploring Christ today, begin to ask God for guidance in your life.

5. REFLECTION ON SCRIPTURE (Spiritual Practice)

Hebrews 4:12 NIV "For the word of God is **living and active**. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; **it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart**."

The mission of New Life is to help **strengthen your journey with Christ**. This means that we will help you move forward in your quest to become closer to Jesus. For this to happen, we must discover how to move through the 'Spiritual Growth' segments. Exploring Christ to > Growing in Christ to > Close to Christ > and to > Christ-centered. This will be the basis of the discussion questions.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH SEGMENTS

Exploring Christ – experiencing first steps in spiritual growth; have a basic belief in God, but are unsure about Christ, Biblical truths and the role they play in their lives.

Growing in Christ – discovering faith through church experiences and starting to incorporate spiritual practices. [prayer, Bible reflection, etc.]

Close to Christ – experiencing higher levels of personal spiritual practices and is more involved in serving. Still holds back from full commitment.

Christ-Centered – living fully surrendered lives demonstrated by much higher levels of spiritual practices and involvement in mentoring. Christ is our most important relationship.

GROUP DISCUSSION or PERSONAL STUDY

1. Why is it important to be honest and diligent in identifying which growth segment you are in if you intend on growing and moving forward spiritually? What value is there in understanding each of the segments? What are some dangers if you don't understand?
2. Discuss what you believe a spiritual window shopper looks like. Why is it important to know the catalyst that will move a window shopper (Exploring Christ) to the next level? What part do we play, and what part does God play, if you are exploring Christ in your life? [Ephesians 4:14-15; John 6:44; John 15:16; Philippians 2:13-14]
3. The sermon notes refer to five beliefs and practices that will help a spiritual window shopper move forward. Why do you believe these are necessary for moving forward? Are all necessary? Is one more important than the others? How do these working together help a person who is exploring Christ grow?
4. Read Matthew 4:19-20 and Luke 9:23-24. How do the above mentioned beliefs and practices play a role in accomplishing what Jesus describes in these two passages? What part do they play in the development of your spiritual passion? [refer back to the sermon notes and scripture references listed there]
5. Break into groups of two or three and discuss how passionate you are in strengthening your personal spiritual journey with Christ and what activities you are engaging in to move forward spiritually.