

# 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.

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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.

{turn page over}

Pastor Bob Wine

January 18, 2009

### WHAT WILL STRENGTHEN MY JOURNEY? - Part 2

*Moving from "Growing in Christ" to "Close to Christ"*  
Job 42:5

- You can't expect to be close to Christ if you don't practice connecting with Him as a friend. Just going to church doesn't constitute an authentic connection with Christ.
- Ask yourself, "What can I do that will increase the probability of being transformed?"

#### Catalysts for Moving Forward & Becoming Close to Christ

##### 1. BELIEVE GOD IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN MY LIFE

- God is a **personal** God.
- Job's pain transformed his vulnerable private faith into a core faith as he personally encountered God.  
**Job 42:5 NLT** "I had only **heard** about you before, but now I have **seen** you with my own eyes."
- Have you grown in your spiritual life so you now firmly believe He is your **personal** God?

##### 2. DELIBERATELY FEED THAT BELIEF

- Nurture your belief in Christ by regularly practicing spiritual disciplines (exercises).

#### Four effective disciplines in crystallizing your love for Christ:

##### 1) Literally **ask** God to guide your daily life

**Colossians 3:15** "Let the peace of Christ **rule** [be the umpire] in your hearts ..."

##### 2) Take time to **reflect** on what the Bible says

- David described a "Christ-centered" life ...

**Psalms 1:2 GW** "he **delights** in the teachings of the Lord and **reflects** on his teachings day and night."

- Regularly reflecting on what the Bible says is the most spiritually activating thing you can do.

### 3) Regularly take time to **dial out** all the distractions

- Why? So you can talk to God with your heart and hear what He is saying as you reflect on what you read in the Bible.
- Writing down your conversation with God multiplies its meaningfulness many times over.
- Each of us needs solitude time with God.

### 4) Evangelism ... Simply sharing with others the **good news** about your best friend - Jesus.

- When Jesus is really personal to you, you can't help but want to introduce your friends to Him.
- There is something amiss with your relationship with Jesus if you are not doing this on a regular basis.

## 3. YOUR PRIVATE TIME WITH GOD BECOMES MORE **ENERGIZING** THAN YOUR CHURCH TIME DOES

- As you practice these spiritual exercises, you find you begin to depend more and more on what you receive from your personal time with God, and your time in church takes on a different value to you.
- Maturity requires the integration, not the **amputation**, of what you learn from infancy through adolescence.

**Hebrews 6:1** "let us ... go on to maturity"

- This shift from a more passive, dependent-on-the-church relationship with Christ to a more active, personal, *Close to Christ* relationship, is the most life-changing insight you will experience in this part of your spiritual journey.

Wake up to what this stage of your spiritual journey offers.

**Today is the day** to make a decision to move forward spiritually. Be diligent and honest in discovering which growth segment you are in currently. Then begin using the catalysts that are proven to help you move forward transitioning into the next segment. For Christians, spiritual growth is not an option -- it is a joy. **Strengthen your spiritual journey with Christ.** Keep moving forward!

## Digging Deeper

For personal or small group study

Week of January 18, 2009

### 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. See Christ as most important relationship.

### - GROUP DISCUSSION or PERSONAL REFLECTION -

1. Last week we talked about moving from Exploring Christ to Growing in Christ. How do you see church activities providing an "on ramp" to spiritual growth in this transition?
2. If someone asked you, "How is your spiritual life going?" How would you respond? What standard do you use to evaluate your spiritual condition?
3. How does believing that God is personally, actively involved in your life affect the way you pursue a "Christ-Centered" life? Should we be more dependent on our "church time" for *strengthening our spiritual journey with Christ*, or the personal time we spend with God? Why? [Job 42:5; 1 John 4:9-10, 19; Jeremiah 31:3; Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 1:2; Luke 11:9-13]
4. Read 1 Timothy 4:7-8 in various translations. What is Paul encouraging young Timothy to do? How is this relevant to us today?
5. We know that training is necessary if we want to succeed in physical competition. It is also true that training is necessary if we are serious about strengthening our relationship with Christ. We can't succeed by simply *trying harder* - by willpower alone. We need to prepare ourselves to receive God's transforming work within us. We need to *train wisely*. **Spiritual disciplines** are the practices we live by that enable us to do what we cannot do by willpower alone. These practices help us grow in the ability to love God and people – the true indicators of spiritual health. (See the four examples in the sermon notes)

Would you say that you are **training** to become more like Christ, or **trying** to be more like Christ? Why? How do spiritual disciplines help us grow in our love relationship with Christ? Write down a few ideas of what spiritual training might involve for you.