

Feb. 3: 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Message: Disciples Make ... Patterns for Growth

Scripture: Romans 12:1-2

Memory Verse: Philippians 2:12-13 “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out His good purposes.”

Blurb: People often say, “Jesus I like, but not the Church,” or “I’m spiritual, just not religious.” The reality is that if we are just spiritual, we are not really growing spiritually. It takes the context, structure and accountability of a local church to push us to grow. Without that, we stagnate at where we are now. This Sunday we’ll explore how Disciples Make . . . Patterns for Growth.

Kids: Nancy showing kids how to make whipping cream and butter by shaking a jar.

Holy Communion: Andrew

Opening Song: *Send Me Out* - Sanctify

Welcome: -Pastor David

Superbowl Sunday!

MN voted worst state for winters!

Open Communion for Holy Communion!

Memory Verse:

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” -Philippians 2:12b

Worship Music Set:

Our God Saves

Your Love Defends Me

Nancy takes kids into lobby -

Where He Leads Me

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Serve Moment: Valentine’s Day Parent’s Night Out

Kid’s Moment - Nancy Daschel

Message: Disciples Make . . . Patterns for Growth

Bumper Video

PP#1: *Image for a vehicle creeping along.*

I've been teaching my kids to drive. And although I teach them basics that apply to any vehicle they may drive, I also want to teach them how each vehicle is different. We have three vehicles, you see, and it's a bit different parking the compact car versus the long minivan. And one of the important differences is how each vehicle is tuned. Some vehicles are tuned higher, and others lower. Higher tuned vehicles seem eager to go, while lower ones seem to work hard just to keep pace. This is important to understand city driving, driving in traffic, and passing.

I tried to make this point by taking them out one day in the van. We were at a dead stop, and I took my foot off the brake. The van started edging forward, but ever so slightly. It encountered a slight incline, and we just stopped all together. Then, I took them out with the car. When I released the break, the car kept an even five mile an hour speed, only slowing a little up the incline. Nathan's comment? "Well, they both go fast if you press the accelerator!" And we still give him the keys!

Cars are made to go. But if you don't press the accelerator, they just inch along.

PP#2: Disciples Make . . . Patterns for Growth

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out His good purposes." -Philippians 2:12-13

We've been talking about discipleship, how to be Jesus' disciples. Disciples of Jesus make more disciples. Disciples make Jesus #1 in their daily choices. Disciples make the Holy Spirit their guide. And today, we learn that Disciples of Jesus Make Patterns for Growth. Philippians 2:12-13 "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out His good purposes."

Christians are a bit like vehicles. We are made to go. But if we don't press the accelerator—spiritually speaking, we simply inch along, and even stop when we encounter hardship.

Paul tells Christians in Philippians 2 to work out their salvation. Odd, if you stop and think about it, because we know that salvation comes free, as a gift. You don't have to do anything to earn it, or work for it, right? I need an amen here! [Amen.]

But Paul is trying to get Christians *from* being saved *to* being disciples. Salvation is a free gift, something that Jesus won for all of us by dying on the cross and being raised again. All we have to do to receive it is to accept it by putting our faith in Jesus, by choosing to receive Him, by making Him our #1. We are *saved from* sin. We are forgiven, made right with God, restored to His favor and acceptance. If you've never made Jesus #1, I urge you to do that today.

But that's only part of salvation. We are also *saved for* a purpose. Remember, when we choose Jesus, we also receive the Holy Spirit who lives in us. And the Spirit then works in us God's plan for our lives: changing us and making us holy, and perfecting us in a life of service to Jesus.

Salvation is not something we receive, a status or rank. It is something we live. Yes, you can be a Christian by proclaiming Jesus in your heart. You can go home and watch TV all day, and still be a believer. But that's not what you are saved *for*.

So, Paul tells believers to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, to move from being believers to being disciples. In two weeks we're starting a grow group about just this. It's called, *Not a Fan*. The point is that we're not just fans of Jesus, who think He's cool and like Him a lot. We're disciples. And that means not staying home watching TV all day, but instead, growing spiritually, in holiness both in heart and in life, personal and social holiness. Join the grow group.

Many Christians choose Jesus and kind of just inch along. Kind of like my car out on the road, shifted in drive, not going anywhere. Many Christians are like this. Months go by, and they are not growing spiritually. They are basically the same spiritual maturity as they were years ago, and

usually quite content that way. Disciples are different. Disciples press down the accelerator, and get going. They get growing. Love God and others. Grow in Christ.

PP#3: Ephesians 4:13-16 (CEB)

13 God’s goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we aren’t supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others. 15 Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let’s grow in every way into Christ, 16 who is the head.

Ephesians 4:13-16, says that God’s plan for us, God’s goal for us, is to grow up spiritually. Verse 13, “God’s goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ. As a result, we aren’t supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others. [Inclines it the road.] Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let’s grow in every way into Christ, who is the head.” Press down the accelerator.

PP#4: Disciples Make . . . Patterns for Growth

1. Make Patterns (Habits) that Help You Grow Spiritually

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out His good purposes.” -Philippians 2:12-13

This is what Paul means when he says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Do those things that help you grow spiritually. Make those patterns, follow those methods. You do them with fear and trembling...in humility, letting the Holy Spirit be in charge. But you have to put in your effort. You have *to follow* those patterns. “God is the one who enables you both *to want and to actually live out* His good purposes.”

Want. God enables us to want to. His Spirit makes our hearts burn to become the mature Christian disciples that God plans for us to be. For me, I sensed it clearly when years ago Reese and I visited a little elderly widow named Jessie Wilson. She was wracked with arthritis, bent over in years, face wrinkled with a long life of hardship. She told us her story, of the tragic deaths of her husband and son, how they lost all their savings, how she had hard medical conditions. But she also shared how God had walked her through all of it, and continued to give her inner peace and joy. She told me how she hated to miss worship, how she read her Bible every day, how she prayed on a set schedule. She then stopped to go get us some tea. She winced as she got up, paused a minute to let the pain fade, smiled a warm smile, and then hobbled off towards the kitchen. As she walked off, I heard her say under her breath, “In Him we live and move and have our being.” She was quoting scripture! (I don’t think she completed high school.) In all her struggles, even to get from one room to the next, she was fully relying on God: F.R.O.G., fully rely on God. As she limped along, her mind was on tea, but she was also praying for God to help her move! I remember turning to Reese and saying, “I want to be like her!” When my life doesn’t go well, and it’s painful even to walk, I want to live and move and have my being in Jesus.” Twenty years later, I still think about Jessie Wilson. I want to be like her. I want to be a disciple.

“God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out His good purposes.” If I want to be a mature disciple like Jessie Wilson, I need to make patterns, habits to grow into that. If I don’t, I will just inch along, staying shallow in my faith.

PP#5: *Image of Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life*, by Nancy Ammerman (Oxford University Press)

Rev. Dr. Nancy Ammerman, Boston University School of Theology Professor of Sociology of Religion, conducted a study among those who profess to believe in God in America. The massive shift, as you may know, is for people to say they are spiritual but not religious. They believe in God, and may even profess Jesus, but they don't get involved with local churches or organized religion. This is very common, and growing. So, Dr. Ammermann conducted research among those who identify as Christians, comparing those who claim to be spiritual but not religious, and those who are actually religious, who are members of local churches and part of organized Christianity. She asked everyone to define what a kind of person they think people ought to be, and then investigated how well they were actually doing it, living it. Surprisingly, she found that religious people were by far living more the way people think they ought: kind, generous, volunteering, helpful, caring. Those who identified as spiritual but not religious were living far more selfish, and ungodly lives. As she explored this, she found that the structures of the dreaded religious activities became pathways, patterns, that helped believers to actually live out their faith in concrete, daily ways. You want to be a better Christian? Join a church!

PP#6: Romans 12:1-2 (CEB)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2. Paul talks about this again. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy [with His help!], to offer your bodies [how you live out your lives every day] as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. [Worship is not just what we do here on Sundays. It's what we do all day long, even while getting tea!] Do not conform to the pattern of this world [dare I say spiritual but not religious?], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. [Chosen and decided patterns of life that lead to spiritual growth.] Then you will be able to test and approve [in your own daily lives, by how you live!] what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." You will grow into mature disciples.

PP#7: Disciples Make . . . Patterns for Growth

1. Make Patterns (Habits) that Help You Grow Spiritually

2. W+2 [Worship Plus Two (One for me, One for them)]

"Jesus went to Nazareth, where He had been raised. On the Sabbath He went to the synagogue, as He normally did. He stood up to read." -Luke 4:16

Disciples, we need to be religious! We need expectations, patterns, routines, accountability that help shape and form us day by day. John Wesley and the early Methodists knew this. That is why they created discipleship pathways, patterns, that kept them focused and growing. They were teased for being methodical. Today, you may be teased for being religious. But we don't care about labels. We care about results. I want to be like Jessie Wilson, so I'm going to church!

Jesus went to church! Luke 4:16 makes a passing observation that tells us volumes about Jesus. Luke says, "On the Sabbath He went to the synagogue, as He normally did." It was Jesus' habit to go to weekly worship! It was His method for staying grounded spiritually.

PP#8: “Jesus left and made His way to the Mount of Olives, as was His custom, and the disciples followed Him.” -Luke 22:39

Or again, we see that Jesus made it a habit to go off and pray by Himself. It’s after the Last Supper, and Jesus knows He will be arrested. Notice the passing comment in Luke 22:39, “Jesus left and made His way to the Mount of Olives, *as was His custom*, and the disciples followed Him.” As was His custom, His regular pattern, His intentional discipleship pathway.

PP#9: Disciples Make . . . Patterns for Growth

1. Make Patterns (Habits) that Help You Grow Spiritually

2. W+2 [Worship Plus Two (One for me, One for them)]

“Jesus went to Nazareth, where He had been raised. On the Sabbath He went to the synagogue, as He normally did. He stood up to read.” -Luke 4:16

Disciples, like the Jesus we follow, make patterns, healthy, holy habits, that help us grow spiritually. Here’s a pattern that we’ve talk about a lot. I want to suggest it to you yet again. Nothing new and flashy here, just simple routine that really works. We stole it from another church who came up with the memorable title: “Worship Plus Two.” Each week, when you can, live the pattern, the method, of Worship Plus Two. It will keep you growing.

Attend corporate worship, yes, make the effort. It was Jesus’ custom, and if He did it, how much more should we! Then, during the week, two other intentional times. One for me: attend a grow group. We’re starting them this month. Join one! Hang out with me after worship. We’re going to discover together the story of the whole Old Testament. It’ll be awesome! One for me, and one for them. Do something each week that helps or blesses someone else. Do an outreach project. Help out at a community service project. Do something for others. Jesus was always out there touching others. So must His disciples. Worship Plus 2. Give it a try. And oh, this weekly pattern is in addition to daily pattern of praying and devotions. We covered that a couple of weeks ago.

PP#10: Disciples Make . . . Patterns for Growth

1. Make Patterns (Habits) that Help You Grow Spiritually

2. W+2 [Worship Plus Two (One for me, One for them)]

3. Invite Someone to Do It with You

Here’s a quick tip as a disciple. Remember how disciples make disciples? One great way to do this is to follow the weekly pattern of Worship Plus Two, but invite someone else to do it with you. Invite someone to go to worship with you...ask them to sit with you. Offer to pick someone up on your way to your grow group. Ask a coworker to join you in your service project. People are so much more open to doing something with you. And it’s so much more fun to do it together, anyway!

Disciples make patterns for growth. Without them, you can be a Christian, but most likely you’ll just stall around and idle spiritually. Me, I want to be like Jessie Wilson. So, I’m putting my foot on the pedal. And oh, I want to personally invite you all to my grow group, right after worship.

Amen.

Holy Communion - Andrew

Prayer of Confession

Words of Assurance

Introduction to Holy Communion

Great Thanksgiving
Words of Institution
Distribution of the Elements
Offering
Stations for Individual Prayer
Song: *Lead Me* - Sanctify

Closing Song: *There Is Joy in the Lord*

Memory Verse:

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” -Philippians 2:12b

Announcements: -Pastor David

Wednesday is Nancy’s cooking: Chow Mein, mac-and-cheese, dino nuggets

Benediction: -Pastor David