

# Building God's People

## October 14, 2018

**Our Savior's Way**  
**Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM**  
**Pastor Kumfer**

About 3 years ago my family and I were sent to New Jersey. I know it sounds like a punishment but it's really not. Anyway, I was studying to become a pastor and in my third year, I was supposed to complete something called a vicarage, which is like an internship. Well for my internship I worked at a church in Jersey.

Neither my wife nor I had ever been that far on the east coast before and we thought it was going to be a great experience. Ezekiel our third son had just been born and Isaac and Kia were old enough to be fun without being boring babies. We were looking forward to what we would learn in that year.

The year began and was going very well. We were invited by a family of the church to have Thanksgiving with them. We had a wonderful trunk or treat, I was leading chapels which, I didn't know then, was setting me up for my ministry here. I was learning a lot about what being a pastor meant. It really started to feel like things were falling into place. We were loving life. Then in April of that year, the bottom fell out from under us.

Have you ever been a part of something like that? Where your life is going really well but something comes in and tips over the apple cart? Maybe it's a sickness. Maybe it's a relationship that is breaking down. Maybe it's a failure that you're having trouble dealing with. Maybe it's something that happened to a family member. That's what it was for us.

In April of that year, Isaac had a seizure on Zeke's birthday. After several trips to the hospital and multiple tests, we learned that he was diagnosed with epilepsy. This was a shock for us. He was only 4 years old when he was diagnosed.

You know, I felt called to pastoral ministry even though at times it was like being pulled. But, when this happened it made me stop in my tracks. I asked myself the questions that I think we all ask when bad things happen. Why? Why did this happen? Why him and not me? Why? Why do you feel so far away? Where are you? Why are you doing this?

How often is this us? We have our faith and are trying to do what we can, being kind and loving our neighbor. But when something bad happens we pull away. Instead of drawing closer to God and trusting in Him, we pull away and begin doubting if He is even real in the first place. It's as if there are two people at war within us.

Paul talks about this a little bit in the passage from Colossians today. The difference he discusses is that between the old man and the new man. The old man is the one who wants to do things their own way and follow the sinful desires of their heart or reject God. This leads to all those things we would consider to be sinful things, idolatry, sexual impurity, anger, greed, and the like. The old man holds on to those things because they bring that temporary good feeling. The temporary release. It feels good but fades. The old man relies on himself and what he is able to accomplish. That's why it's so devastating when he fails because he has no one to blame but himself, which he doesn't want to do so the cycle of lying and sin begins all over again.

The new man is completely different. The new man lets the "message of Christ dwell within him richly. We call this spiritual growth. Spiritual growth then leads to discipleship. This is what builds God's people. The message of Christ which dwells in us through Jesus Christ, who entered into us at our baptism, still lives in us! That message lives in us and is fed through the words of the scriptures. It is strengthened in the actions we take that reflect Jesus.

I know you've experienced it. That moment when someone asked you for food or money and you gave it to them. That time when a friend was hurting and you comforted them. That moment when someone was sick and you helped them. That moment when you told the truth when it would be easier to lie. These moments build you up. They fill you with the spirit of God and encourage and grow you in your faith.

All of that is just the beginning of discipleship. I mentioned discipleship before because the value we're talking about is "building God's people." This value includes spiritual growth and discipleship. Engaging in those two things helps us to follow God's will and grow in our faith and dependence on Him.

If we turn back to the story about my family you can imagine it was a difficult time. I was struggling with faith and had difficult questions that were challenging me. But then something changed.

Throughout this whole process, I was praying, I was doing some reading of the Bible. I was feeling so far away from God but at the same time was drawing closer. That message of Christ was filling me up and changing my perspective. And that's what flipped the switch for me. In everything, God said through Jesus His son, in the words of the apostles and prophets. In the words found in this great book, I found something that I wasn't expecting. I found hope.

All of my questions made it seem like I was far away. All the hurt and difficulty were pulling me away. But through those words of God, and the stories I had learned, the message of Christ was dwelling richly in me. Through that hardship, God was building His people. And he was doing it literally in the time Isaac and I spent in the hospital. Here is a picture of him after the test that confirmed his epilepsy was done. That day we built a Lego pirate ship together. But God had been building in me the trust and reliance on Him as we had literally been building Legos together.

That's the purpose and strength in discipleship and spiritual growth. Our reading from Colossians reminds us that there were

ways that we did things when we were apart from God. It's that old man that I was talking about earlier. The one who would lie, and worship idols. The one who sins without regard for what it is doing to himself or the other person. That same passage tells us to put off the old self because we have put on the new self.

The new self which comes to us through Christ dwelling in us. That new self is radically different from the old. Through the spiritual growth we receive from reading God's word and doing actions that reflect Christ in the world, we are renewed. Paul says that we are, "being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." And through this renewal, all separation is gone. We aren't divided by race or culture or gender or political views. We are joined by compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness and the like.

It all sounds nice and great to do those things but we know the reality. That we still sin because we are still living in this sinful world. Because of that our spiritual growth and discipleship are so important. They allow Christ to rule in our hearts. When we distance ourselves from the opportunities for growth in Christ we distance ourselves from the perspective which empowers us to live as Christ did. And though it will be difficult to do every day we know that it is possible and a blessing for us to do it.

Because we have a God who sacrificed everything to bring us into a closer relationship with Him. That closer relationship that allows us in whatever we do, whether word or deed, to do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Because He wants us to draw close so that He can build God's people. In Jesus name, Amen.