

Same Old You Week 2

Spirit Powered Everyday Living

INTRODUCTION

This is the second week of our mini series that is designed to help us kick off the new year in the powerful way. The series is called; “the same old you.” If we fail to read scripture and seek God’s face in prayer for example, another year will pass and in January 2018 we will have still failed to read through the bible from cover to cover and we may feel as though following God has become stale and boring. There are certain disciplines that healthy Christians practice that set the tone in our lives for God to work powerfully.

Let’s begin by examining a scripture that gives us a glimpse of what normal is supposed to look like for the believer. Then we will finish by sharing a simple practice that will help ensure that your daily life is infused with God’s power, presence and blessing.

READ THE TEXT

Ephesians 4:10-16 (ESV)

10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, **that he might fill all things.**)

11 And **he gave** the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

12 **to equip the saints** for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the

knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

*14 **so that** we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

*15 **Rather**, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when **each part is working properly, makes the body grow** so that it builds itself up in love.*

PREACH THE TEXT

Ephesians 4:10-16 (ESV)

*¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, **that he might fill all things.**)*

Jesus Christ descended from heaven to earth. He came in the flesh, died for our sins and was buried in a tomb. He descended. But then He rose and ascended. And what was the larger purpose of His ascension?

THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS.

The primary purpose of the resurrection is that Jesus Christ fills all things. What exactly does that mean? The Father having received the payment of Jesus Christ for a sin sacrifice for all who receive Him desires that His amazing Son is glorified and that His glory and fame stretch from

one end of the universe to the other and fill all things. God the Father is calling each of us to join Him in adoring His Son. God has sent men and angels and His Spirit to the ends of the universe to proclaim to Jesus Christ; “You are risen in glory and you reign in heaven and earth.”

One of the places that Jesus fills the universe is in our everyday life and our activities. Do we live our everyday lives to the glory of Jesus Christ? If so, we do our part to reflect the presence of Jesus Christ who fills the universe with His glory.

There are ways in which this world and our personal lack of spiritual, emotional, and mental maturity take the focus off of the glory of Jesus Christ. Rather than filling your life and activities with His glory and purposes our lack of discipline and maturity focus on small minded temptations and distractions found in this life. But God gave us an answer that will help us focus our lives back on the many glories of Jesus Christ and live our lives to Him both inside and outside the church. It begins with a gift.

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

HE GAVE

Some people are designed to be a gift to God’s people. Without the gift of Nehemiah there is no wall. Without the gift of Moses there is no march through the desert to the promised land. Without the gift of Peter and Barnabas there is no church plant in Antioch which became a beachhead for church planting to the ends of the earth.

God has given Christian Leaders to the church as a gift so they can work toward filling the universe with the glory of Jesus Christ. And what is the practical means and point of focus for those who are given as a gift to the church? First it is to rightly focus the church on filling our lives and even the universe with the glory of God's Son. And on a practical manner here is God's primary call to those who are a gift to His people, the church.

12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

TO EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY

So 1 Peter tells pastors and elders to shepherd the flock. 1 Timothy tells pastors and elders to speak the truth in love and confront false doctrine. Other passages speak of advancing the discipline of prayer and of organizing ministry so that chaos does not reign. But all of these areas of shepherding aim toward one end; to equip God's people.

UNTIL WE ARE UNIFIED AND MATURE

This equipping continues until God's people are mature. Baby Christians are like infants. They can not yet feed themselves. But they are reaching for the spoon and trying to figure out how to take in the nourishment of God's word and presence. Then a teen in the faith spreads his or her wings and even though they may be off base or miss a few

nuances the enthusiasm of a teen ager is valuable to the body. They are learning to feed themselves but there is still a lot of cheetos and mac and cheese. A parent in the faith knows how to feed him or herself the word and Christian disciplines of prayer and obedience and also how to feed spiritual children and teens. And an elder (whether officially serving the capacity or not) knows what the entire community needs and speaks with wisdom to the larger community of faith.

TO THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

When we learn to feed ourselves the right spiritual food such as prayer, meditating on the word, making music in our hearts to the Lord, then our lives begin to reflect the glory of Jesus Christ and there is one more heart that is filled with the glory of our king. When we feed on God's presence and His word and begin to take on a Christian worldview what is the result?

14(we are) no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

NO LONGER CHILDREN (maturity emotionally, mentally and doctrinally)

It is possible to continue to grow in years but remain a spiritual infant. Those who do not grow in the word and become equipped sometimes fall prey to false teaching like the word-faith movement or the latest fad that has no basis in God's word. Those who do not grow in the word and in Christian maturity are often carried along by the latest slander fest and

have wide swings in emotion and live in a constant state of crisis. That is Satan's plan in order to keep you from focusing on filling the universe with the glory of Jesus Christ.

But there is a way to break the negativity and move from infant to teen to adult maturity in the faith. And verses 15 through 16 give us some insight as to what that might look like.

15 *Rather,*

“Rather” than remaining an infant in the faith and being carried along by the latest scheme of satan of the latest doctrinal fad here is what we are called to do.

speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

GROW UP IN EVERY WAY

The first thing we must determine that we are no longer satisfied being an infant in the faith. Determine to grow up in the way you handle God's word and discern truth from error. Determine to grow in your emotional maturity. Determine to grow up in the way you serve others rather than serving yourself and your flesh.

The way to work toward maturity is to set a consist set of practices in place so that by sticking with it, little by little each day you grow stronger and more mature moving from infant to adolescent to teen to adult/parent to elder.

STORY: When my daughter first learned to play basketball she approached me the day before the season and asked me to show her how to play the game. Well, basketball is a game that one does not learn in a couple hours. But one can learn to make a layup and get a rebound in a couple hours. And that matters and you have to begin somewhere.

There only way you learn to excel on the court is to practice the skills of dribbling, passing, shooting, keeping your head under pressure. And that comes only through practice and repetition. So also the Christian faith and a growing emphasis on God's glory in our lives take root only through practice. END STORY

How do you know whether you are growing strong in the faith? Here is one of the signs that growth is taking place.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH (a sign of growth)

One of the ways you will know that you are growing and becoming more mature in your faith is that you can speak the truth in love. Speaking truth means that you grow in understanding God's word so that you have an increasing knowledge base of truth. You can't speak the truth if you do not know the truth. And you know that you are growing as you learn to treat with discernment wisdom the things that you hear from others.

STORY: The Pastor is Terrible: I recall one time getting word that one of the pastors I trained eight or nine years ago was doing a terrible job. He was out of control and drunk with power and doing nothing. Now critical

thinking tells me that this pastor would not be in the church for over 8 years if he was doing such a terrible job. Critical thinking tells me the elders of the church with whom Pastor Tonee meets regularly and who write his performance evaluation would not allow him to be out of control or drunk with power for 8 years without bouncing him. Critical thinking tells me that the person saying this had some hidden agenda or some personal issue such as jealousy or unrealistic expectations. If you are growing in your ability to know the truth and speak the truth you will be able to discern whether you are hearing things spoken in ignorance and insolent disrespect.

SPEAKING IN LOVE (a sign of growth)

Another evidence that you are growing is that not only can you discern and then speak truth. You speak with love. Here is the opposite of speaking the truth in love.

“Obama is nothing but a communist. Everyone who voted for Trump is a racist and a misogynist. All charismatics are ruled by emotions and they are idiots. All baptists are rigid and judgmental. Everyone one in the church is a hypocrite. If these idiots don't listen to me I'll just go somewhere else! Those elders have no idea what they are doing!”

This kind of speech dehumanizes others and is a sign of immaturity. It is not the speech of those who claim Jesus Christ. Speaking the truth and airing our differences in a peaceable manner is honoring to God. But the labelling and spreading unsubstantiated conclusions is ungodly because it

is unloving. Speaking truth, substantiated truth... in a loving manner is evidence that a person might be growing in his or her walk with God.

(Verse 15 continued) ***we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.***

WHEN EACH PART IS WORKING THE BODY HEALS THE BODY

When our lives are rightly focused amazing things begin to occur within the entire church. When each part of the body is functioning and focused properly the church becomes its own spiritual and emotional hospital. When we stop fault finding and focus on the glory of God and count our blessings the church comes to life. Healing and growth and encouragement flow out of this body.

When someone is wounded by a death in the family the mature believer who is using his or her spiritual gift of encouragement and compassion will come and minister to the person in pain. And when the person opens his or her mouth the power of The Spirit will put just the right words in his or her mouth. And at the same time God The Holy Spirit will mix His healing power with those words so they do not bound off the heart of the wounded person but they sink in and act as healing words from the throne of God Himself.

When someone is confused about doctrine or needs godly counsel someone with a gift of teaching or wisdom will use his or her gifts and

speak to the confused person. And God will supercharge their words so they land and change hearts and minds. That is the power of a Christian who makes the glories of Jesus Christ known and fills the universe with truth and grace. That is what results when we go to practice and grow in the skills of grace and truth and love.

SUMMARY AND APPLICATIONS

One of the sobering realities is that many people claim faith in Jesus Christ but live either as a spiritual infant or just like someone that knows nothing about God. And that results when we never go to practice. We fail to go to practice in meditating on the word and conversing with God and seeking to serve and love and bless and praise. Then we show up in the game of life and we shoot airballs.

Here are two simple guidelines that can help us continue to grow and make sure that we are walking in the Spirit and not the flesh.

A) Go to practice. Once you take the first step and set aside time to seek God and put down all the distraction and lean your heart toward His you will begin to grow.

And here is one practical thing that each of us can do to see whether our daily activities actually line up with the way a mature person of faith invests his or her time;

B) Print out your calendar or make a complete list of your activities for a few days. Then prayerfully ask God to show you which of your activities were thought up by you in the flesh and which were thought up by God.

TAKING IT HOME

Here are questions you can ask as you look over your calendar appointments or list of activities:

1. *Was your calendar appointment birthed by the Holy Spirit?*
2. *How does this appointment fit into the overall vision and mission of your personal calling and of your church?*
3. *Are you looking forward to this event with Spirit-filled enthusiasm – or with anxiety and regret?*
4. *Is there anyone else that could take this appointment for you as you mentor and coach them through the task?*