

From the Music Director & Christian Education Coordinator

The Basis of Spiritual Formation

This month there's a few more things I'd like to establish about spiritual formation before moving on to spiritual disciplines. Remember 2 Corinthians 3:18 - "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; *for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.*" Notice the emphasis on "comes from the Lord"; the whole point is that our transformation is a grace of God. This is imperative to our spiritual formation. We cannot approach Christian living like we're trying to earn God's love or prove our own righteousness. I want to make it clear before we get into spiritual disciplines that I am not promoting legalism. The practices that we'll be talking about are given to us by God's grace, and it is through His grace that engaging in these spiritual "exercises" changes our hearts so that we are more like Jesus.

There are a few key things we must believe for spiritual formation to take place. We must believe that Jesus knew what He was talking about during His earthly ministry. Wholly, we must trust Him as our Teacher and that "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness..." (2 Peter 1:3). Second, we must be convinced that change is possible. In this life, we can't attain perfection. However, while we still wrestle with our sin nature now, we can always imitate Jesus in greater measures. Our journey through an eternity with Jesus begins the moment we put our faith in Him, and there is progress to be made on this side of heaven. Lastly, we must believe that the Bible is God's Word given to us. The Bible is our greatest resource for spiritual formation. Through the Bible, we can know the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and best of all, we can know their love. It is this deep, unchanging love that motivates us to draw closer to God and be like Him. We also get a glimpse of God's glory in nature, and we should take time to notice the beauty of the world He has created.

I encourage you to take time during the last of these beautiful fall days to be outdoors and reflect on God's beauty and goodness. At the same time, do some introspection, and consider if you fully grasp the whole scope of God's grace towards you. Are there any places in your life where you are trying to earn approval from God or people? I hope you may rest in God's love despite all of life's demands.

With Love,
Isabella Stutzman

P.S. For this series of articles I am drawing on the book *A Spiritual Formation Primer* by Richella Parham. It is available for free at <https://www.richellajparham.com/free-resources/>

Online Services

Our Sunday service is available to watch live every week at 10:30 AM on our website, our YouTube channel, and our Facebook page. You can go back and watch any service you've missed or would like to hear again on YouTube and Facebook. Services are listed with their date, speaker, and sermon title.

November 2022

FOCUS



First Reformed Church
824-3161

firstref@adamswells.com

www.firstreformedbluffton.org

Worship~10:30 a.m. Eat & Greet 9:45 a.m.

Senior Pastor-Dr. Bryson Bell

CE Coordinator & Music Director-

Isabella Stutzman

November Volunteers

Worship Nursery:

Nov. 6-Angie Oman

Nov. 20-Connie Graham

Nov. 13-Twila D. & Jarie

Nov. 27-Julia Johnson

Children's Worship:

Preschool~Caylynne Moore

k-4th ~ Michelle Mills

5th-7th~ Steve & Linda Sturgeon

Greeters: Kevin & Leslie Neuwenschwander

Celebrating Birthday's

Nov. 3~Emma Smith

Nov. 3~Joe Rice

Nov. 6~Shari Miller

Nov. 8~Derrick Oman

Nov. 8~Holly Smith

Nov. 8~Daniel Allen

Nov. 13~Alan Williams

Nov. 13~Ron Dubbeld

Nov. 13~Rodger Popplewell

Nov. 19~Judy Maxwell

Nov. 20~Harper Allen

Nov. 25~Estyn Stronczek

Nov. 27~Derek Smith

Nov. 29~Louise Deihl

Nov. 29~Brad Kohlhagen

Nov. 30~Don Karwoski

Nov. 30~Mia Smith

Monthly Calendar

Nov. 1: 6:30 p.m. Christian Education

Nov. 2: 6:00 p.m. Bell Choir Practice 7:00 p.m.-Missions

Nov. 5: 10:00 a.m. Deboning turkeys-Fellowship Hall

Set your clocks back one hour tonight!

Nov. 6: 9:30 a.m. **How to Share Your Faith-Dr. Bell-Rider Lounge**

9:45 a.m.- Eat & Greet 10:30 a.m.-Worship & Communion

6:00 p.m.-Discipleship Class-The Bell's home

Nov. 7: 6:00 p.m. Trustees 6:30 p.m.-Consistory

7:30 p.m.-Elders

Nov. 9:-6:00 p.m.-Bell Choir Practice

Nov. 12: **Church Serve Day**

9:00 a.m.-Hanging of the Greens

10:00 a.m.-Deboning Turkey-Fellowship Hall

Nov 13: 9:30 a.m. **How to Share Your Faith-Dr. Bell-Rider Lounge**

9:45 a.m.-Eat & Greet 10:30 a.m.- Worship-

The Blessing Tree will be set up

Nov. 16: 6:00 p.m.-Bell Choir Practice

Nov. 19: 10:00 a.m.-Deboning Turkeys-Fellowship Hall

Nov. 20: 9:30 a.m. **How to Share Your Faith-Dr. Bell-Rider Lounge**

9:45 a.m.- Eat & Greet 10:30 a.m.- Worship

Nov. 23: Prep for Thanksgiving-office closes at 11:00 a.m.

Nov. 24: Community Thanksgiving Dinner

Nov. 25: 8:30 a.m. -Men's Fellowship Breakfast-Hoosier House

Office Closed

Nov. 26: 10:00 a.m.-Women's Brunch-Isabella's Home

Nov. 27: 9:45 a.m. -Eat & Greet 10:30 a.m. -Worship

We taking turkey donations for our 17th Annual Free Community Thanksgiving Dinner. We ask that you give the donation directly to Mara Jo Williams or Judy Maxwell. Checks are to be made out to one of them, not the church. If you place your donation in the Sunday collection plate, please place in a separate envelope marked turkey donation.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Turkey deboning will be November 5th, 12th, and 19th at 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Sign up sheets for Thanksgiving volunteers are located in the Overflow Room and on our Facebook page.

Saturday, November 12th we will be having a Church Serve Day.

At 9 AM we will start with the hanging of the greens, and kids can participate in making crafts and decorating their classrooms. At 10 AM we will start deboning turkeys, and there will also be gift bags to put together for our shut-ins. Around noon we will have pizza for lunch. There are sign-ups for hanging of the greens or deboning turkeys on Facebook; please add your name to one of them so we know how many to expect.

HOW TO SHARE YOUR FAITH, a 3 week class with Dr. Bell. November 6th, November 13th and November 20th at 9:30 a.m. Please sign up so we know how much material is needed. There will be sign-up sheets on our Facebook page and in the Overflow Room.

From the Pastor's Desk:

"In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
(I Thessalonians 5:18)

It is time for another giving of thanks, as we enter the season of Thanksgiving and Advent. It is hard to imagine that another year is coming to a close, yet, here it is. We have much to be thankful for and we must pause to give God the thanks and the praise for keeping us by His hand.

Giving thanks is sometimes hard to do when we can't see beyond our present circumstances. When we find ourselves in a moment of brokenness, in a time of grief from loss, in a time when things are prevailing in our lives that we were not prepared for, times when we get angry or we worry, it is difficult to reach deep into the reservoir of the soul and give thanks to God. I have been told this, "Preach to a broken heart and you will never lack an audience, for there is one in every pew."

What is it that you are thankful for? I made a short list of things I take for granted. Although they are minute in the broad spectrum of things, I need to give thanks for them. As I share my list, think of your own:

1. Indoor plumbing
2. 600 count thread sheets
3. Water from the faucet
4. Pepsi Cola
5. A computer that enables me to make instant changes in messages, programs of worship and the like
6. Holding my wife's hand as we walk together – (Note: I now find that really helps in stability)
7. Laughing at myself, even when I do something embarrassing
8. Electricity
9. Being able to work

While these are only a few and, as minute as they may be on a much grander scale of things, I thank God for them all and for His goodness.

Thanksgiving is something that has to be cultivated in our lives. A joyful heart, a thankful heart is one that exists regardless of a person's circumstances. God's Word and worship to the Lord are keys to cultivating a thankful heart. We are reminded many times over in God's Word about God's character. Through our worship of God, we focus on what God has done and what God is doing. When we pray, we begin to take on God's point of view and not our own. Through our worship and God's Word, we are learning to become more like Him.

Thanksgiving is a time for pause to remember the blessings of God. Let's not take the small, ordinary things for granted. "I will worship You and praise Your name, for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name."
(Psalm 138:2)

On Sunday, November 6, I will begin a series on the Second Coming of Christ. I have titled the series: "Advent: The Celebration of the First, the Anticipation of the Second". This series will take us through the season of Advent, and I will do my best to speak to

the "Why" and the "When" regarding Christ's return for His people. Listed below are the topics for each week and the scripture texts for each message. Please invite others to come with you and get in on this series.

"Advent: The Celebration of the First, the Anticipation of the Second"

November 6 – "But Concerning That Day"
Scripture: Mark 13:32-33

November 13 – "Signs of the Times"
Scripture: Matthew 24:1-14; 29-31

November 20 – "The Abomination of Desolation"
Scripture: Mark 13:14-23
2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

November 27 – "An Outpouring of God's Grace"
Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5-11

December 4 – "No Peace! Know Peace!"
Scripture: Revelation 19:11-16
Ephesians 2:13-16
Mark 13:32-37

December 11 – "Rejoice and be Ready!"
Scripture: Matthew 25:1-13
Revelation 19:6-8

December 18 – "Love's Ever Abiding Presence"
Scripture: John 3:16-18
Luke 21:5-28
Revelation 21:1-4

Again, I want to invite you to invite someone to come with you and join in on our study regarding a subject that is often talked about – the end times! I am looking forward to sharing with you!

With My Love,

Pastor Gene