

2-26-23 Sermon #8 Reflection

As we learn more about the Holy Spirit and how much power we get by having Him, I'd like to ask all of you to identify when God's been in your lives. This is going to take some work on your part, and I'd like to challenge you with doing some homework. During the week, try to think as far back as you can and write down as many memories of your life that you can. Start when you were a child and work your way up to now. The more things you can remember, the better it will be. Think of good things and bad.

Last week's message was about the "Meaning of Life". To get a practical understanding of this, an overall perspective of your life is needed. Once you have a good outline of your memories, look them over and mark the times that God was in these events. See when you relied on yourself vs. God and be honest. Then, identify when you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Being baptized for the forgiveness of sin needs to be in all of our time lines. When we accept Jesus and are baptized, we make a decision to surrender our will over to the care and control of Christ. Identifying when you were given the gift of the Holy Spirit illustrates John 14:25-27:

²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Identifying when the Holy Spirit came into our lives should bring a hope for Heaven, and we should be able to see good things that come after that. Last week, when I shared a study that revealed the average human being generates 70,000 thoughts a day, and 85% of those are negative, that's scary. Would you say this statistic is true in your life?

After receiving the Spirit, we need to see just how much we allowed God to be present in our lives. Remembering when we depended on God helps us with seeing how effective prayer is.

If we can find times when the Spirit gave us power, it creates a natural desire to want more of it.

We need to see the Spirit in ACTION. Making God real in our lives doesn't just happen by accident. Drawing nearer to God is Jesus' desire.

Today's message is for us to identify how life changed when we found Christ and when we received the gift of the Holy Spirit. In John 16:13 it says,

¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

We get tremendous power when the Holy Spirit indwells us. Applying specific examples in our personal journey will give us more desire to rely on Christ and then we can take a good relationship with God and make it better. If it's true that 85% of our thoughts are negative, ask

God to reveal how the Holy Spirit has brought God's glory and righteousness into your life. When people see God only as a God of discipline, it's hard to want to follow Him. God isn't just waiting to stomp on us. Having the Holy Spirit and living by the Spirit proves our adoption.

God's desire for us is to have joy in our days, but if we can't see God's LOVE in the Spirit, we'll struggle with wanting to instinctively rely on Him. Deciding to trust God and believing we are adopted children, should help us naturally change our thoughts.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon pursued everything that could bring personal pleasure. He also found that "Apart from God", nothing could. It was just chasing after the wind.

Reflection is very biblical. James 1:22 begins,

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

Looking in a mirror isn't for us to just find the negative. Studies show that for every one negative word spoken to us, we need to hear 10 positive things to overcome that hurt. Reflection isn't about how bad we are. It's about how much greatness comes by having the gift of the Holy Spirit living in us. Think about when someone compliments you for something. Do you struggle with accepting their compliment? We can dismiss them by telling ourselves "no", but inside our hearts are rejoicing. Instead of saying "thank you" and accepting them, we usually say things like, "no, that was God". If God loves us so much that He would give us the gift of the Holy Spirit, then we should be thanking God for allowing us to experience Matthew 25:21:

²¹ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

In the parable of the coins, the master repeats this twice. "Well done, good and faithful servant!" is what God wants to tell us. "Come and share your master's happiness!" is God's desire, and He wants us to feel it when others give us praise. This isn't for us to "puff" ourselves up, it's how we get to see the Holy Spirit alive in us. When others compliment us, our negative thoughts want to tell us it's just flattery, and we think they're only saying them so we'll give them something. Sometimes that's true. That's easy to spot, but when we receive genuine affirmation, we shouldn't reject it.

That's rejecting the Spirit. We should rejoice in knowing we're showing God's character to others. Applying Romans 12:1-2 connects with the Holy Spirit:

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. ² 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.

Making God more real in our lives comes by knowing when we've let God in. Reflection is important. Asking questions like; "when", "where", and "how" has the Spirit lived in me, gives us the desire to experience it more. The more we see Christ working in us, the more we're going to relate to Matthew 6:31-33:

³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

When we accept Jesus and are baptized, Galatians 2:19-21 takes place in our hearts:

¹⁹ "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Describing our walk with Jesus as peaks and valleys doesn't have to be permanent. Reflecting on the times that we called on the Holy Spirit is how we develop a more steady walk, and it's how we journey with God through the sanctification process. We tell ourselves to be thankful and content in all things, but do we believe it's possible? Having the Holy Spirit living in us is such an amazing gift, and until we claim it and decide to live out our adoption into Heaven, we're cheating ourselves from God's blessings.

The book of James is a great book. **It's about action.** In James 2:14-26 we read about Faith and Deeds:

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. ²⁰ You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what

they do and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Because we have accepted Jesus into our hearts, we all can reflect on times in our lives when we did similar things **for God**. Without depending on the Holy Spirit, James 4:1-4 happens:

⁴ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Then in verse 5 it makes a transition and says,

⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." ⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Having the Holy Spirit gives us so much power. The vision of the EC church is to bring Christ to the lost. If we reflect on how the Holy Spirit has helped us with changing our lives, then we have the ability to share our story with others. Planting and watering are all about what God has done for us. Reflecting on the times that Christ was with you takes looking back into your lives and gives us our reason for why we believe. Asking others how we can pray for them or asking them to come visit our church doesn't have to be hard. If we see how having God in our lives brings happiness and joy, we can naturally want to tell others. We know that complete joy and satisfaction comes when we reach Heaven. The Holy Spirit is only available to those who choose to make Christ alive.

If you need to find Christ in a way that makes the spirit alive, don't wait. If you're unsure about your salvation and need to find answers, come forward or call me. Take the first step and pray for answers.

Let's pray.