

Unlocking Your Spiritual Greatness

Union 2015, Week One

The topic for the next few weeks will be Spiritual Greatness, what it is and how to get it.

Lets begin with a definition.

- It is strength in Spiritual matters, it is *power and peace* at the same time
- It is contentment or *calm in the face of calamity* or the unknown.
- It is believing that God is in control and that is a good thing.

Perhaps you know people like that you wish you were more like...

The term Spiritual Greatness is to the best of my ability and knowledge unique to me, but the notion of it is not. Others have called it...

The Victorious Christian Life

The Abundant Christian Life

The Purpose Driven Life

Rick Warren

The Grace Filled Life

Chuck Swindoll

The Spirit Filled Life

Charles Stanley

I could go on, but you get the idea.

If you joined within the last three years we gave you a copy of the book. I have been told it is as valuable for a new believer as a “seasoned veteran” of the faith. It is not so valuable because of what I have written in it, but because of what God does in the life of a person who earnestly seeks him and the book is a path or program for you to do that.

As a disclaimer, right here, I have to give God the credit. Yes, I have written 6 books on discipleship training, prayer, faith, personal development and systematic theology, or the basics of our faith...

But, God told me what to write, in fact He gave me the burden to write. If God has never told you what to write or say, I know that sounds strange, but hopefully by the time we finish, you will know what I mean because I will challenge you to do some serious journaling over the next few weeks so get a notebook or 3 ring binder.

The book discusses Christian Disciplines and outlines a 35 day daily devotional program.

Also as preliminary, I have taught this book here before and it took over a year. I taught it at Faith Fellowship CP Church over the last 14 weeks and just finished two weeks ago. This time around will much less than that because much of it you can do on your own.

In fact, you are ready to do much of it on your own.

One verse that will get much attention in the book is Philippians 3:16, *Only live up to what you have already attained.* Aside from saying “don’t backslide,”

- It is saying that you have already attained something,
- In fact you have already attained much.
- What I think is implied, is that we are ready to attain even more.

Each book I have written was not my surplus knowledge flowing out of me. No, each book was the result of a hungering or seeking on my part and what I wrote was what I learned.

I recorded primarily so I wouldn’t forget it and secondarily so others could share in what I learned.

Without going into the long story of how USG came about, it stemmed from one question and I imagine you each have asked it at one time or another.

Is this all there is? Is this as good as it is going to get?
Is this all there is to the Abundant, Victorious Christian Life?

Like most of you, I’ve been in church all my life. I was christened in a water fountain in a community center where my parents first attended church. At 3 years old I was at the ground-breaking and I helped turn the first dirt. I accepted Christ there and was married there and my parents still attend there.

But... years down the road, after moving and being transferred to different places, we joined Union. That was 33 years ago. After hearing Leonard preach a while, I began asking myself that question.

Is this all there is?

Leonard was talking about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the living Son of Living God Almighty. I believed what he was saying, but my life felt like... there a disconnect between what I believed and what I experienced?

I had to know the answer. I knew I was saved, I believed in God and John 3:16, but I was still missing something. I wanted more, I needed more; there had to be more to this wonderfully thrilling, engaging victorious, Abundant Christian life than I was experiencing, perhaps you have had the same feeling.

I was serving God out of duty and tradition, not relationship. I knew I was supposed to, I didn't mind, but the joy wasn't always there.

That doesn't work any better in a marriage than with God.

God began taking me down a path that I am still on and I suspect you are too.

God didn't answer my question immediately. He had to show me some easy scriptures before I could understand the more difficult questions.

That is the way God works.

He shows you a small truth so you can build on it. It begins with a small faith building experience, then over time as we trust and obey, He blesses us with more. Jesus said that *to whom much is required, much is required*. I think he was referring to faith and progressive subsequent obedience.

The two books on faith came to me that way. I was obedient in another area and God blessed me with the burden of the books. I say burden because, a burden is something you can not avoid or escape, it has to be dealt with.

We said several weeks ago there are different kinds of scripture... there may be more, but there are at least 3.

Comforting (Psalms, *Ye thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...*)

Instructive (Proverbs, it is really good idea, not a law; *train up a child...*)

Directive ... and when a Directive Verse is put in to use it can become Transformative

Q./ What does Paul say about being transformed?

Romans 12:2 ... *be ye not conformed to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.*

Q./ What is the pattern of the world look like?

A./ Sin, self, the old man, pride, lean on your own understanding, living a life that doesn't look different than anyone else's.

If we profess that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, we need to know what it says and actually do it **so that** we may be transformed.

i.e. We have to put the WORD into action. Be doers, not hearers...

Again, when a directive verse is put into use, it can change or transform your life. That is what we're going for... a changed, in fact a constantly changing life.

The answers began coming to me when I understood...

- To not lean on my own understanding
- To quench not the Spirit, or the leading of the Spirit of God
- To step out in faith, even a little bit and as I did, God showed me more.

As a thirty year + member of this church, I can say that we have seen God be faithful as we as a church have trusted and obeyed. Sometimes bank balances made decisions for us, sometimes, we simply believed and trusted and obeyed. That usually worded out best.

Without a faith-building experience it is very hard to go out on a "Spiritual" limb.

Q./ Why is going out on a limb important?

A./ That is where the fruit, or faith building experience is.

Q./ When have you seen God being faithful, personally or at Union?

- Lack of Rain at God N' Guns 90-100% chance
- Lack Rain on our Parade 80 + % chance
- 30+ years ago, Lack of rain on a Live Nativity Scene
- These are so minor... you name some...
- Healings

After I began to see God at work and incorporated a few easy verses into my life, He showed me some more difficult ones.

From *there, a point of obedience*, He began to answer my question.

I had to get to a new foundational level before I could understand the answer to the question... *Is this all there is?*

The next verse He showed me was Hebrews 5:14-6:1-3. You have heard me speak of before ... This is where we change our diet...

- from milk to meat,
- we move on from the elementary teachings and to the Teachings of Righteousness and ...
- by so doing we can know the difference between good and evil, or as I like to say, we can know the will of God.

We could spend time in Hebrews, but you have already heard it before. The elementary teachings are really good. He lists them, believe in God, stop sinning, pray, the resurrection and eternal life or damnation. That is pretty good stuff isn't it Leonard? But we are to move on beyond that...

We're not going to dwell on it, but let's do read it so it will be familiar. READ Hebrews ...

So the answer finally came...

And do you know what God told me about this being all there is?

He said, Yes and No. Actually it was No and Yes.

The No Part of "Is that all there is?" is in Hebrews, Chapters 5 & 6 ... we should ***move on*** from the elementary teachings... That means there is more. We should have more and do more.

Those verses became transformative for me when I realized they were useful for teaching and correcting me, when it became personal.

The Yes Part of “Is that all there is?” is in 2 Peter 1:3 ff

By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Is there more?

No, God has already given us everything we need... for life and godliness.

So we see... There is more, and there is not more... Yes and No.

Q./ Does that make the Bible contradictory?

A./ No, I don't think so.

Let's back up... Lets go all the way back to the beginning.

Q./ In the beginning, what did God do?

A./ He created... the earth, the water, the skies, the expanse or stars, the plants
The animals, and man to have dominion over them, right?

Q./ What about man was so different than everything else?

A./ Man was made in the image and likeness of who? ... God

Why is that special? What does that mean?

Do you have any idea of how big a question that is?

What does it mean that man was made in the image and likeness of God?

Theologians have spent their careers trying to answer that, whole books have written trying to answer that question. In fact, I once about 12 pages on the question and if you suffer with insomnia, it probably would help.

Does Not Mean ... 6'2" and eyes of blue, 2 arms, 2 legs and 10 fingers and toes...

Does Mean ... we were created to uniquely share some of his attributes with him.
Love, joy, peace... for sure, but there is more.

Man was designed and created to relate to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit individually as each part of the Trinity can also relate to each other part individually. This makes man uniquely unlike any other created thing.

It means Man was created to share in a life of godliness with God himself.
We are to be holy as God is holy. (Peter and Deuteronomy)

Godliness is not human-ness, it is separate and distinct; it is a life set apart for God modeled by or exhibited by holiness. Not perfection as Jesus, but Holy as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, the Disciples and Paul... and you too.

That is what Peter meant when he said that *by God's divine power, He has given us every thing we need for life AND godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his grace and goodness.*

If there ever was a place where knowledge is power, this is it.

Let's look further at 2 Peter 1: 5-12 ... Read ... These verses can Transform your life.

In 8 verses are several key words and thoughts...

The first ones I'll call your attention to, are not the ones you may think of first.

The first is in vs. 5 ... Add, add to your faith.

The second is in vs. 8 ... possess these in increasing measure

Q./ What do those two words, add and increasing mean?

A./ Change something, make something more...

Make your faith more...

Q./ WHY? Why do we need to add or change? GET READY FOR THIS!

A./ Faith is not enough Again, for a life of godliness, faith is not enough.

He isn't talking about salvation or justification.

He is talking about a life of godliness, holiness or sanctification.

Paul lived a life of godliness. Even as Saul he did, but certainly as Paul, he modeled the life we should live, set apart for God.

Paul was quick to compare the *Christian Walk or life of godliness* to a sporting contest.

He ran the race, he completed his course.

Lets compare spiritual training to physical training.

Add to Faith or belief ... Virtue or Goodness

To Goodness ... Knowledge

Basic ability

Study, learn skills,
technique, *study*
to show yourself
approved as a
workman...

To Knowledge ... Self-Control (Discipline)

To Self- control ... Perseverance

To Perseverance ... Godliness (holiness, separateness)

To Godliness ... Brotherly Kindness

Diet, exercise, practice
Cont. diet, exer.,practice
Continue until distinctive
Once recognized as
distinctive, share what
you have learned
Love, the greatest of
these is love

To Brotherly Kindness ... Love

To finish...

How do we answer the question,

Is this all there is,

Is this as good as it gets?

It doesn't matter who you are or how far along you are along your walk or path, there is more for you to learn and experience.

While at the same time, *God has already given you all that you need for life and godliness.*

The question now is not is this all there is, but

How do I Release or Unlock Spiritual Greatness in my life?

I will answer that next week... but as a clue, the answer involves sense of purpose AND

- *faith*
- *knowledge,*
- *practice*
- *self-discipline*
- *persistence*
- *achievement*

Explain Organization of the book

The Process of Spiritual Greatness

The Path to Spiritual Greatness

Get your notebooks for journaling, by week after next we will be sharing with each other what God is doing in our lives.

HOMEWORK

1. Read Chapters 1-3
2. Recall your favorite comforting, instructive and directive verses.
3. Decide which directive verses have become transformative.
4. How have the transformative verses changed your life?
5. List what you pray for daily. (Means you will have to pray daily)
6. List Answered prayers and praises