



New Life Christian Community

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Cor 5:17

Sunday, December 16, 2018

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PASTORAL PONDERING

Suffering

I have been pondering the question of suffering lately.

In the question of comfort, the world would have us believe that we are dealing with a new and different era. We are currently battling an "Opioid Crisis" or an "Epidemic of Narcotics". I would argue that currently we do not have an opioid epidemic any more than we have an Insulin epidemic. What we have now and have always had is a pandemic of suffering.

Suffering is the process of dealing with some sort of pain. Opiates work on both physical and psychological aspects of pain so well that we have turned to them almost exclusively with the most dangerous side effect that to a large extent people quit asking the question of "Why do we have suffering?"

Simply put, we have suffering because we have free will. We can choose to do the will of the Father or not. That conflict causes pain and suffering. We think that pain is the result of external forces, but is it?

1 Peter 4:1-2 *"Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God."*

What does it mean for us as Christians to "suffer in the flesh?" Could it be, to have this mind in you that will suffer in the flesh and aim for the absence of sin? Is it to put this mind in you that you will suffer anything in the pursuit of sinlessness? That does not say you will try to be sinless of your own accord, but that you will pursue that mind which was in Christ to the extent that any inherent suffering from this pursuit is a part of His suffering.

"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." Philippians 3:8-11

Ceasing from sin then is what it says. If we take sin to be anything that we think, say, or do that is against the will of God then if we choose to follow Christ no matter what persecutions are happening then we will not be sinning. In each small action, each large thought, each entire life. This then tells me to use my will to follow Christ. Think about what His reason and purpose are and adhere to them. You will be persecuted. You will suffer. That's ok. You will be sinless (by His blood.) Think of it this way, if we have the same

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Ministry Directory:

Building & Grounds Ministry

Dan Peikert 715.377.6557
dandpeikert@yahoo.com

Children's Church Ministry

Pastor Paul Linzmeier: 320.226.5581
pastorpaul.nlcc@gmail.com

Coffee Ministry

Sandy Moe: 715.417.1812
sandy.klj@hotmail.com

Finance Administration

Pete Manship (Treasurer):
715.755.3330
financeministry@newlifechristiancommunity.org

GriefShare Adult Ministry

Connie B: 715.557.1431
conjoh1@gmail.com

GriefShare Youth Ministry

Robin Mattson: 715.566.1945
robinmattson27@gmail.com

Meal Relief Ministry

Danielle Panik: 715.554.2214
dhischer@gmail.com

Missions Outreach

Lorraine Milner: 715.557.0661
lrnilner@gmail.com

Newsletter Administration

Dawn Holm: 715.472.8453
djholm@lakeland.ws

Resource Center

Cory Mattson: 715.417.0945
cory79mattson@hotmail.com

Sunday Meal Services

Barb Manship: 612.804.9793 or
715.755.3330
barb@pbmpkmanship.com

Transportation Services

Art Behr: 715.220.6882
behrden1@charter.net

Video Ministry

Jim Mabee: 651.470.4172
jmabee@centurytel.net

Worship Ministry

Pastor Bennett Anderson:
920.395.8548
bennett.lyle86@gmail.com

Pastoral Pondering

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mind as Christ and deny our own desires as He did is that not "suffering in the flesh"?

Wow-Could it be that suffering in the flesh is actually just the suffering of being in the flesh. Having passions and desires that we deny, this is suffering. It is a command for us, "so as" to live for the rest of the time in the flesh. "So as" to live this way, no longer taking the non-suffering way and following it where you don't have to deny passions and pleasures, where you are not ridiculed. Instead taking the way where you struggle against your own desires and say "not my will but thy will".

What is the greatest picture of suffering in the Bible? I would argue the Garden of Gethsemane. After this, we see the attempts made to inflict physical pain, but do we see a narrative of Jesus suffering or do we just place on Him what it would feel like to us? We don't really read that Jesus felt so much pain and suffering, but we see Him with his face to the cross enduring whatever.

So this "suffering in the flesh" is not a onetime thing but an ongoing task whenever we are in the flesh. We can do this for all our lives. If we suffer in one area, we cease from sinning in one area. If we submit fully we cease from sinning in all areas. It is an ideal perfected by Christ alone but aimed at by us. It is our goal. We strive in this way by fixing our eyes on Christ. When we do this, we know what to do and we endure the "suffering" that comes with it. Internal and external. This applies equally to the man living in a time of little outward persecution (last half of the 20th century) and a time of extreme outward persecution (the first century). Were this not so, the people who resisted the more evil foisted on them would be more sinless and those who live simple quiet lives would be more sinful. Suffering is what we are in the flesh, something we share in being united to Christ. A constant conflict. A battle to deny our own will and joyfully submitting to God's will in imitating Christ. ~Rene Milner

Announcements and Upcoming Events

SING AND SHARE

Come join us here **THIS evening, December 16th at 6:30pm**. As we enter this season of celebrating the incarnation, let us gather to lift our voices in joy-filled song. We will also have an open mic for all who would like to share the wondrous works of the Lord in your life, how Christ has drawn your gaze towards Him more this year or share a certain text from the Word that has served you this year. This is a great opportunity to encourage and spur on your brothers and sisters in Christ to keep trusting and looking to Jesus. Join us at the building and with a warm cup of hot cocoa or coffee in hand; let us rejoice that our Savior has come!

ANNUAL PARTNERS MEETING

Mark your calendars for our Annual Partners Meeting **Saturday, January 19th at 10:00am**. As a partner of the body of New Life this is one way to participate in the workings of the body and also to be aware of the goals and direction the Lord is leading us in. If you have been attending New Life for some time and you would like to become a partner or have questions about what it means, please reach out to one of the elders or pastors and set up a time to meet.

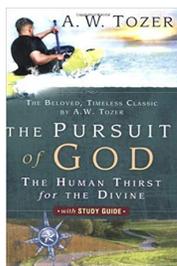
Regardless if you are a partner or not, for whoever calls New Life home, we all need to be continually praying for the Lords leading, especially as we enter a new year. May Jesus always be at the center!

Please bring a dish for the potluck brunch to follow. What great way to express your partnership!

Christmas Eve Service

Please join us **Monday, December 24th** for New Life's Christmas Eve service at **6:30pm** at the building. We will gather to sing, pray, and share in a short devotional. Though there will be many gifts given this month, one of the great gifts we receive being in Christ is true fellowship with Him and one another as it says in 1 John 1:3, "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." So please consider who you could invite: family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers that they too may receive Him as Lord and Savior and have true fellowship with Jesus Christ.

December News from the New Life Resource Center!



Are you familiar with the writings of A.W. Tozer? I have much enjoyed his way of communicating beautiful truths about God in a way that grabs my heart and imagination. In the Resource Center, we have his book "The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine."

This book includes a study guide section at the end, which includes helps for personal study and leaders, which is so useful for however you choose to read it. Chapters include topics such as: The Blessedness of Possession Nothing, Apprehending God, The Gaze of the Soul, and Meekness and Rest (and many more!). Here's a quote from the chapter "The Speaking Voice": "I believe that much of our religious unbelief is due to a wrong conception of and a wrong feeling for the Scriptures of Truth. A silent God suddenly began to speak in a book and when the book was finished lapsed back into silence again forever. Now we read

the book as the record of what God said when He was for a brief time in a speaking mood. With notions like that in our heads, how can we believe? The facts are that God is not silent, has never been silent. It is the nature of God to speak." This book and many others are available for purchase in the Resource Center, to help you in your own pursuit of God. ~Cory Mattson

"FAMILY WORSHIP" FOLLOW-UP

Months ago a book called "Family Worship" by Don Whitney was handed out to each family. We want to follow up and hear how it has served your family or influenced your understanding of family worship in the home. We want all families to be strong and healthy and growing in relationship with Jesus, and we see from the Word that growth in spiritual maturity and cultivation a healthy relationship with Jesus begins in the home. We would love to hear from you! Please share comments through New Life Connect, or email, or share with a pastor or elder in person.

December Memory Verse

Isaiah 9:6

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." ESV

Fellowship Tip: Share with someone today what you have been learning as you are studying the Advent reading plan.

Upcoming Potluck/Meal Teams:

Dec 23 Meal Team #3

Dec 30 Meal Team #4

Please join us for fellowship and a meal following our service today!

Pastoral Eldership Team:

Pastor Tony Minell 715.417.1982
galatiansii20@yahoo.com

Pastor Paul Linzmeier 320.226.5581
pastorpaul.nlcc@gmail.com

Pastor Bennett Anderson 920.395.8548
bennett.lyle86@gmail.com

Cory Mattson - Secretary 715.417.0945

Zachary Fugate 715.379.2918

Paul Gilbertson 612.799.4865

Dale Mattson 715.566.2302

Greg Mattson 715.417.2444

Rene Milner 715.557.0185

Jim Nelson 651.283.2132

This Week's Schedule of Events @ NLCC:

Dec 16 Sing and Share 6:30 pm

Dec 19 Women's Bible Study 12:30 pm

Dec 19 Immerse Family Studies 6:15 pm

Dec 20 Men's Bible Study 6:30 am

Dec 20 Women's Bible Study 9:30 am

Dec 20 ALL GriefShare Folks 6:30 pm
Adults and Youth meet separately

Dec 20 Ezekiel Bible Study 7-8:30 pm

Dec 24 Christmas Eve Service 6:30 pm

Check out New Life Online

newlifechristiancommunity.org

• Events • Sermons Online • New Life Connect • Set Lists • & More

JUDGES

Our Desperate Need for the King

Today's Passage:

Pastor Tony's message is from the Old Testament book,
Judges 20:1-17

Sermon Notes: