

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
The Messenger is published weekly by the South Florida Ave. Church of Christ meeting at 1807 South Florida Ave - Lakeland, FL 33803 Vol. 71 No. 05 01-30-18

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching
since 1969

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

A Fisherman's Advice on Spiritual Growth

Hiram Kemp

Peter is probably the most well-known of the apostles. It was Peter who walked on water for a time with the Lord before being distracted by the storm and beginning to sink (Mt. 14:24-31). Peter made the good confession that Jesus is the Son of God (Mt. 16:16-18). Jesus promised to give Peter the keys to the kingdom, which he used the first Pentecost following the resurrection. On the Mountain of Transfiguration, Peter allowed his excitement to get the best of him as he wanted to build three tabernacles and heard God say that he should listen to Jesus (Mt. 17:1-5). Finally, who could forget the foretelling and the follow-through as Peter denied knowing Jesus three times on the night Jesus was arrested (Lk. 22:54-62)? When Jesus rose from the grave, he met with Peter, forgave Peter's failure, and charged him with feeding His sheep (Jn. 21:15-22). From this brief survey of Peter's life, it is easy to see that he was well acquainted with the subject of spiritual growth. He had his ups and downs. At times, he was faithful and fearless while at other times he was timid and cowardly. Years later, Peter would write the Book of Second Peter in which he teaches us three lessons about spiritual growth that we would be wise to heed.

Ingredients of Spiritual Growth

We have everything we need in order to enjoy life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). However, we need to continue to grow in order to enjoy the promises given to us by God. In the section known as the Christian graces, Peter says we need to add to the virtues and graces given us by God (2 Pet. 1:5-8). It is interesting that while God equips us with everything we need, he still expects us to do our part. In Christ we are given every spiritual blessing, but we must make the most of those blessings. If we want our calling and election to be sure, we will cultivate the Christian graces listed by Peter and enjoy an abundant entrance into God's presence. Maybe, many Christians are often tormented and uneasy about their eternal fate because of a failure to grow and develop in these areas. In this letter which is designed to encourage spiritual growth, Peter lays out faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love as the ingredients necessary for that growth to take place. While apostasy is a real possibility for any Christian, Peter guarantees sure footing to the one who excels in the Christian graces. This individual will never fall. Just a brief examination of the attributes listed by Peter highlight the importance of both learning Christianity and then *(continued on page 2)*

practicing what we learn. Our attitude is just as important as our intellect. Spiritual growth begins when we have the right ingredients and Peter says God has given them to us. We must simply build upon them.

Enemies of Spiritual Growth

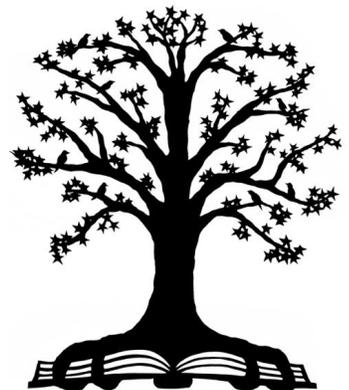
Second Peter 2 begins with the apostle's warning us about false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1-3). Just because we want to grow spiritually does not mean the Devil and his co-workers will allow us to do so in peace. Peter guarantees the presence of false teachers but gives us warning so that we may be able to identify them and avoid them. Peter then uses fallen angels, Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot to show that God is able to punish the wicked and still deliver the righteous (2 Pet. 2:4-9). As many today promote things that are contrary to what we read in the New Testament, we should not be discouraged. We can grow spiritually even in the midst of such confusion. God has a faithful track record of delivering the godly while they are in the midst of ungodly individuals (Jn. 17:15-17). Every Christian must become familiar with the truth to the point that he or she can point out false doctrine as soon as it is heard. The Bereans were noble not simply because they were daily Bible students, but because they were checking to see if what the apostles taught aligned with the scriptures (Acts 17:11). We should not be so gullible as to believe anything that anyone says who quotes a Bible verse. Instead, we must test the spirits and see whether they are from God (1 Jn. 4:1). From articles to sermons, everything we hear must be filtered through the truth of scripture so that we can be helpers of the truth and not promoters of error. False teachers are enemies to our spiritual growth. To assist them in any way is to be a partaker of the evil they espouse (2 Jn. 9-11). Some people teach false doctrine not knowing any better, and when shown their error, they are willing to change (Acts 18:25-26). However, those identified by Peter know better, yet boldly persist in their error. These false teachers boast of providing liberty to those who listen to them, not realizing that they themselves are enslaved. These are individuals who can be compared to a dog returning to his vomit (2 Pet. 2:18-22). When the ingredients from Second Peter 1 are instilled and exercised, it is easier to detect and reject those who fit the profile of false teacher as mentioned in Second Peter 2.

Necessity and Motivation for Spiritual Growth

One of the most well-known verses in Second Peter is the last verse: "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). Peter has already told us what it takes to grow and that some will try and hinder our growth, but why should we care to grow at all? Appreciate the three motivations Peter gives in this final chapter to encourage spiritual growth among Christians. In the first place, the reality that Jesus is coming again should motivate us to grow. Though skeptics and mockers deny the reality of Jesus' return, Christians know better (2 Pet. 3:4-9). When Jesus returns, he will destroy the world and everything in it with fire (2 Pet. 3:10). What a sobering thought! Next, Peter appeals to the fact that we look for a new heavens and a new earth (2 Pet. 3:13). Since, this world is not our home, we will want to grow spiritually so that when it is time to leave this world, we can do so with confidence. Lastly, there is the danger of falling away. We do not want to fall from our own steadfastness, so we need to continue to grow more each day (2 Pet. 3:17). We may drift away from Christ accidentally, but none of us will remain faithful by mistake. It takes effort and intentionality to cultivate the kind of spiritual growth that makes for a strong Christian life. It is not impossible and takes time, but that is why we grow in grace a little at a time.

Conclusion

Peter, though an aged apostle by the time he wrote Second Peter, knew all about spiritual growth. He knew that one could be given the best ingredients and tools, but a failure to properly use and apply the things given would do no good. Peter also knew that despite our best efforts, there would be enemies to our spiritual growth, and we must be ready and equipped to overcome their traps. After being encouraged by Jesus to feed His sheep, Peter no doubt knew the power that encouragement could provide as we all struggle from time to time with motivation for spiritual growth. Second Peter does not take a long time to read, but when we meditate on its teachings and apply them, that short epistle will consume our lives.



SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Faith West, Carol Edmondson, David Williams, Kaeli Shearer and the Hendrix family have all been out with the flu. Carol Eason is now home from re-hab. Bobby Simpson was taken back to the hospital on Sunday evening, but is now doing better. Antonio Martin is recuperating after knee surgery. Anita Shearer had carpal tunnel surgery on her hand. Bill Long was discharged from the hospital and will be undergoing re-hab at home. Also remember Wanda Bruno, Ginny Hamby, Jim Turner, Brenda Mask and Margaret Coone in prayer.

Shut In Members: Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Don Starks, Evelyn Wyatt and Sharon Edler.

Others: Lynn Stevens, Bob McAnally, Jerry Cole, Joan Shanes, (Jeanelle Thrower's sister in law), Doris Smith, Joyce Stearsman and Jack Pinckert

Upcoming Events

Saturday Feb. 3rd: Ladies Day at the Sebring Parkway church of Christ at 8:00 a.m.

Sunday February 4th: Fellowship In-Service after evening services.

Sunday February 4th: Lads to Leaders Meeting.

Saturday February 10th: Youth Explosion at the Orange St. church of Christ 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Sunday Feb. 11th: Senior Saints outing to hear the Lakeland Symphony Orchestra at the Branscomb Auditorium at Florida Southern College. Program is from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. Meet at the church parking lot at 1:30 to car pool. Anyone is welcome!

Sunday February 11th: Elders/Deacons Meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 13th: Valentine's Day Banquet at 6:00 p.m. All adults member's are invited. The men of the congregation will be cooking for the women. The meal will be provided. Nursery will be provided by our teens. Please sign up on bulletin board and list the number attending and how many children need babysitting.

Saturday February 17th: Men's breakfast here at SFA. at 8:00 a.m.

Sunday February 18th: Teacher Workshop from 2:00-5:00 p.m for all those teaching next quarter from March-May.

Response

Caelen Bailey, son of Ciera Edwards, who recently placed membership, asked for the prayers of the congregation on Sunday.

Visitors

David & Susan Stearsman, Luke and Zach, Margaret Grant, and Victor and Alexis Travis.

 Tune into AM 1330 (station WWAB) with your friends and neighbors every Monday from 5:00-5:30 p.m. for the "Way of Truth" program. Let's influence Lakeland!

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

February

David Anderson **Table** David Williams
Paul Romine **Assist** Robert Cooper

Sunday, February 4, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Frank Hamby
Prayer..... Tucker Sweeney

10:30 A.M.

Announcements.....Fred Strickland
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Matt Willcutt
Sermon.....C.J. Grimes
Closing Prayer..... Tim Croson
Sound Booth.....Casey Paulin

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer..... Kyle Bingle
Sermon.....C.J. Grimes
Closing Prayer..... Charles Paulin
Sound Booth.....Casey Paulin
Greeters..... Paulins
Att. Cards..... Willcutt boys
Open & Close Building..... Bobby Sheumaker

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... David Anderson
Closing Prayer..... C.J. Grimes

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - (863) 602-9005

Sunday, February 11, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Stacey Paulin
Prayer..... David Anderson

10:30 A.M.

Announcements.....Fred Strickland
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Wayne Shearer
Sermon.....Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer.....C.J. Grimes
Sound Booth.....Tucker Sweeney

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer..... Steve Hunley
Sermon.....Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... C. J. Grimes
Sound Booth..... Tucker Sweeney
Greeters..... Debra/Melissa
Att. Cards..... Paul/Sebastian
Open & Close Building..... Bobby Sheumaker

Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Song Leader..... Ken Walker
Opening Prayer..... David Williams
Closing Prayer..... Paul Romine

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Jan. 07..... \$6,026.20
Jan. 14..... \$5,421.19
Jan. 21..... \$5,223.60
Jan. 28..... \$5,099.75
Contribution Average..... \$5,442.69
2018 Weekly Budget..... \$4,716.51

THE WEAR AND TEAR OF TIME

The clock pictured below was installed in an out-of-reach, semi-private location to commemorate an individual's achievement, despite several health related struggles along the way. That clock was determined to remain in that place at least until such a time as the individual left this world to be with God. Not long ago, someone actually knocked the clock from the wall and part of it broke when it fell. The person who caused the fall offered to replace the clock, but that was deemed unnecessary. Some things are purely symbolic, and a change of symbol would take away the meaning behind it. However, one thing this incident should remind us of is that things in this life, over time, wear down and eventually come to an end. Nothing lasts forever this side of eternity! For those in Christ, however, there is good news! "Even though



our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18). How are we using our time? Do we, like Paul, show the wear and tear of faithfulness to God (cf. Gal. 6:17)? Let us use this temporary life in service to God so its wear and tear will give way to eternal glory! ❤️ *Brian*



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
 1807 South Florida Avenue
 Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

Set to Go!

Feb. 23-25, 2018

YES Weekend

Forrest Park, Valdosta



Pray as we gear-up for another YES II mission trip to Boquete, Panama, June 1-9, 2018. Our young people and their chaperones will be giving out tracts, inviting people to a Gospel meeting, and conducting Bible studies.

Let us continue to pray for our young people as they prepare for the Lads to Leaders convention in Orlando. What they are doing is not easy but rewarding!



Save the Date

March 4-7, 2018

Gospel Meeting with Jody Apple

Think souls! Let's Invite our friends and neighbors to church assemblies and/or to one-on-one Bible studies!



GET

Thanks to a lot of people working behind the scenes, there are plenty

INVOLVED

good works and activities going on with the South Florida Ave church of Christ.

Now is the time to "let your light so shine"!