

**YOU?**  
**BELONG!**

**JANUARY  
DEVOTIONAL**

# Reach the Lost

Sunday, Jan 6th

**Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.**

I was recently out with my kids, got turned around, and couldn't find my youngest son, James. He is eleven and I was more annoyed than worried when I started calling his name. After a short time of not being able to find him my mindset switched. I gathered the other kids and we started a small search party. Eventually we found him in the sporting goods store playing on a treadmill. Like most dads, I went from annoyed to worried to angry in about 30 minutes. I kept thinking about calling his mom but what would I tell her?

I still had the other four kids safely with me, which means I had an 80 percent success rate. I don't think that would have mattered in the moment I called Ruth to tell her I lost James. She loves them just as much, but the five of us would be insignificant in light of one of her children missing. As believers, it seems like we are able to sit in our comfortable churches and tell a loving heavenly father that there are millions of his children missing and in trouble but we have a few still safe. But for the Lord, the priority would be the lost children. When Jesus says he will leave the 99 safe sheep "in open country" to find the one lost sheep it's because the lost has become a priority. He doesn't love them more, it's just because they are lost. When they are found the bible tells us that there is more rejoicing in heaven for the one found than for the 99 who were never lost. The Lord wants us to be a search party for his lost children. They have to be the priority because they are lost and need to be found.

Please pray for lost loved ones today. Speak their names out loud. Ask God for courage and boldness to be able to share the truth in love.

**Mark 16:15 Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.**

**Pastor Andy Tracy  
Senior Pastor**

# Reach the Lost

Monday, Jan 7th

What will I say? How do I pray with them? How do I bring it up? These are just a few of the questions that go through our minds before we talk to someone about Jesus. For some of us maybe those questions never come to our minds, whether that's because we are fearful or fearless. For others those questions are very real. In the book of Acts, when Jesus is ascending up to heaven, He tells His disciples this,

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.””

Acts of the Apostles 1:8 NLT

Did you see it? You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. You have all you need to reach your friends and family for Jesus. The Holy Spirit brings peace when our fears are rising, will guide us through the difficult conversations, and give us words when we don't know what to speak. If you continue to read through Acts you will see people who trusted this power and because of that they left a legacy that we are still reading about to this day.

Many times we don't think we are qualified enough to share, but the day you became qualified was the day you surrendered your life to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is what makes you qualified. Do you trust Him? This week ask God to give you opportunities to be a witness, and when the opportunity arises remember... You Are Qualified!

**Pastor Shawn Vandemark**  
**Assistant Pastor**

# Reach the Lost

Tuesday, Jan 8th

I am a working mom with an awesome husband, three little kids, and all the cares of life that come along with it. I want to perform well at work, I want to raise Godly children, I want to love and cherish my husband well... So, it's probably not much of a surprise when I share a common prayer of mine lately, "I need You Lord, I desperately need You". But recently when I prayed this common prayer I sensed the reply, "I need you".

Matthew 28:19-20 NIV 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

I believe there is beauty in being dependent upon God, but this was such a great reminder for me that we have also been given a directive from the Lord. I recently read this quote as well by John Bevere, "He (Moses) was God's servant, so he thought first of Him before thinking of himself". I want to focus less on my 'rough days' and remember it's not my feelings or discomforts I serve. I serve Him first, and Him alone.

He yearns for His people, His lost and hurting people. And we are His voice. We must be moved with compassion for those who are living outside of His help in this life. Let's be moved by what moves the heart of our amazing God.

Here's my prayer for myself and for you, my teammates in this great commission: Lord, I want to remember today, and at the start of every day, that I work for You. I am Your servant. You need me. I give You my full attention; my desire is for You. How today would You like me to share Your love and Your gospel effectively to move this world closer to You? Help me 'salt' my surroundings with Your love. May I serve others for Your and for their benefit alone. Direct my day for Your pleasure! And thank You Lord, because I know with all my heart, when I focus my life and my efforts on You wholeheartedly, You bless my life in return. Thank you, Jesus. In your precious name I pray. Amen

It all ends beautifully when I'm purposely walking with Him AND for Him.

**Sharon Lillemon**  
**Secretary/Treasurer**

# Reach the Lost

Wednesday, Jan 9th

“Life is like a coin. You can spend it any way you wish, but you only spend it once.”

--Lillian Dickson

How can we be sure that we're making the most of our time? The only judge you can use is whether the majority of your time is spent on things that will expire when you are gone or is your time going to things that are eternal.

First, are you ready for eternity. This may not be a thought that you entertain often but you will be out of this world MUCH longer than you are in it. Make sure you're prepared for that time. If you never asked Jesus into your heart, stop and pray right now. If you need to ask God to forgive you of some issues, again, now is the perfect time to make a heart adjustment.

Second, are you preparing others for eternity. Imagine how grateful you would be if someone were to give you 3 million dollars. Invested properly you could live comfortably off of that for the rest of your life and never even touch the 3 million given to you. How much more grateful will people be that you introduce to Jesus? You are not giving them money that will be here today and gone tomorrow but you are introducing them to a Friend, a support system and way of life that will last for eternity

Acts 17:22 So Paul stood up in front of the council and said:

People of Athens, I see that you are very religious. 23 As I was going through your city and looking at the things you worship, I found an altar with the words, “To an Unknown God.” You worship this God, but you don't really know him. So I want to tell you about him.

This is one of my favorite passages of scripture. Paul walks through this temple of idols and then begins to tell them of the God they call UNKNOWN. How many do you meet everyday who are worshipping many gods but to them Christ is still unknown? They put their jobs, friendships, even Netflix in front of knowing God. It's simply because no one has told them the truth of who He is. Do you want to spend your time wisely? Live your life with eternity in mind and try to bring someone along with you. You can do it. Introduce someone to Jesus TODAY!!

**Pastor Morvin Dixon**  
**Assistant Pastor**

# Reach the Lost

Thursday, Jan 10th

Ministry of Reconciliation “And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.” 2 Corinthians 21-5:18

We ALL have been given this ministry and it is to spread the good news that Jesus paid the price for ALL of our sins. To become a part of His kingdom and to go to heaven when we die, we only have to receive this wonderful gift that’s already been bought for us!

I am soooo glad that I get to go to heaven! Many think hell is going to be one big party. But there will be “complete darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth”. In other words eternal (did you get that? ETERNAL!) agony! We wouldn’t want anyone to go there. And yet, (me too) we are very hesitant to talk to others about this great Jesus we have experienced.

Did you know that “life” is in each believer. Not because we have done anything to deserve it, but simply because we choose to make Jesus the lord of our lives. Likewise, “death” is in the unbeliever. They haven’t done anything to deserve it either but choose (many unknowingly) to make Satan the lord of their lives.

Am I saying that GOOD people go to hell. Yes! ALL of our sin is dealt with. It’s not a matter of how “good” we are, but “whose” we are.

Vs 20 “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God was making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”  
God help us to see people the way you see them! Give us a heart of compassion!  
Send someone across our path TODAY

**Jill Tracy**  
**Founding Pastor**

# Reach the Lost

Friday, Jan 11th

Today's media and society can easily wash our minds and hearts of the compassion God has given us. It's easy to pass a teen, young adult, or heck even an elderly person and think negatively about them due to appearance, language, or their actions. I think we have grabbed ahold of the verse "Associate with fools and get in trouble (Proverbs 13:20)" in a way that wasn't intended.

Our calling as Christians is to see not with our natural eyes but with our Spiritual eyes. To look at every passing person as the son and daughter of our Most High God! They too, just as rightfully as us, were died for. I encourage you to see the lost for the reasons they are distant. The pain they are battling from not feeling good enough. The loneliness that has lead them to misuse their body for the hope somebody may love them. The language being from lack of happiness and joy.

It's then that we are able to open our hearts, our wisdom and the greatest gift to them. Then we can share with joy and compassion that they are not alone. They have a God who loves them more deeply than imaginable. When we share not only the word of the gospel but also the fruit that's when salvation occurs.

"Lord, I pray for our eyes and hearts to be opened and broken for the lost. God help us see the roots of their pain so we can pray for healing and chains to be broken. I ask for an awakening in and around Defiance to turn judgement into outreach. God provide opportunities for us to lead the sheep to their Shepherd. I thank you Lord for your promises. You promise to give us the perfect words that will pierce the broken heart which will fill them with love and purpose. In your glorious name, Amen"

**Kate Brooke**

# **Engage in Community**

**Saturday, Jan 12th**

Galatians 6:10- Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

I have been thinking a lot lately about community and what that means to me. Our family had quite a rough few months and it was starting to really wear on me. Three cars all had very expensive issues, kids with varying normal and not-normal issues, a cracked windshield, new financial obligations that seemed to come on an almost daily basis, and finally a finished basement that flooded with over a foot of water-ruining many of our possessions. I was very close to being at my wits end and felt like it would take very little to push me over the edge and all of the sudden people started showing up. I don't know why it happened for us right when we needed it, and some wait years to find their "people", but it taught me a very important lesson. You never know when someone is hanging on by a thread, and I think sometimes we don't show up because we feel like we don't have a lot of time or resources to offer, but even the smallest of gestures can make a lasting impact on people. We just don't know. So I encourage you, show up. Make an effort.

"Father God, help us to remember the difference we can make in the lives of others. Show us how we can help. Amen."

**Ruth Tracy**  
**Worship Leader**

# Engage in Community

Sunday, Jan 13th

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

I remember going to English class and counting down the seconds til the class was over. However I did learn enough to know that the word “engage” in the phrase, “Engage in Community”, is a verb and the subject is an understood you: you engage. That means you are called to action, and the action is engage. The things we want/need rarely come to us. We have to go get them. Community is so important. The bible tells us that as iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another, but to have community is going to require effort.

I love the word engage. It means to cause someone to become involved in. If you are looking for love, good works, and encouragement you find it in community. Dave Ramsey says if you want to become a millionaire you need to hang out with millionaires. The problem is when you aren't a millionaire or are new to being a millionaire you don't feel like you fit. The same is true for almost all communities. Just five years ago I felt very awkward at golf courses. I was terrible at golf, blue collar and did not understand the ethics of the game. When you don't feel like you fit you have a choice. You either leave or stick around long enough til you do fit. I love golf now and fit in very well. I'm actually considered a veteran and have lots of newbies ask me questions about the game. I hope you understand that all believers need community and if you don't feel like you fit, engage until you do. Don't run away. Engage.

Pray that God sends you to the people you need and the people that need you.

**Eccl. 4:9-12 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.**

**Pastor Andy Tracy  
Senior Pastor**

# Engage in Community

Monday, Jan 14th

Your brain needs friends in order to thrive. A study published last year in the Journal of Neuroscience said that the brain's frontal midline showed increased activity when the test subjects interacted with their friends or even looked at photos of their friends. In other words, friends make your brain come alive.

The importance of community was known before there was a Bible and even before more than one person walked the earth. God looked on man and said, "It is not good for man to be alone." Thus, God decreed that human beings shall, and must, live in community. So God made a woman. When the man saw the woman, his frontal midline lit up, he recited a poem, and they enjoyed one another. This happened instantly and naturally, with no instruction manual. In God's creation, the fish took to the water, the birds took to the air, and man and woman took to one another.

Of course, sin has made this more complicated. Humans usually act like stinkers, making community hard. But for us to give up on community is like the fish giving up on water or birds eschewing the air. We need community to be what God has made us to be. We malfunction without it. As much as humans sometimes give me a headache, I need community to live well and thrive. Now please excuse me while I enjoy the stinkers with whom God has blessed me to enjoy life.

**Jeff Horvath**  
Church Elder

If you are struggling with finding your place in the “family of God”, don’t give up! I have discovered great treasures of friendship, fellowship, encouragement and wisdom in drastically varied places and people. After all, our Savior is our common bond. From small living rooms in England sharing in front of a fire with endless cups of tea, to people from continents away with a totally different lifestyle, to world travelers and creative homebodies, there is strength in opening up not only yourself to what they can teach you but also bringing out your strengths to them. My challenge to you is to find a group that doesn’t match your age, job, and background exactly. Be adventurous! Join and seek a small group that will be as much about giving as learning. It is only in transparency and openness that we will grow and discover the depth of how God works and moves.

Philemon 1:6-7 reads “I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ, Your love has given me great joy and encouragement.” Does your “community” bring you great joy? My children live in different states, my only sibling is in England and my mom is two hours away and never calls-I call her! So my family has had to include those that I choose to fellowship with here-or my family would be drastically limited. Find your “people” and pray, share, support, study, laugh and cry with them, and if you have no other family, your need will be fulfilled in unexpected joy!

It is important to remember to practice using the gifts of the Spirit in your “family” so that you have greater freedom in growing and sharing. Sometimes we are not enough, even when we care tremendously so pray together and let Him move in your lives. It is a safe place to do this, and if someone makes a mistake- forgive and love on and learn.

Prayer: Lord help me find the person(s) you want me to befriend and treat as a family, and be open to what they will teach me as well.

# Engage in Community

Wednesday, Jan 16th

Hebrews 10:24 (Amplified) and let us consider [thoughtfully] how we may encourage one another to love and to do good deeds, 25 not forsaking our meeting together [as believers for worship and instruction], as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another;

I love that when God gave our church His vision for our future, He included this phrase, “Engaging in Community.” Why? Because that word ‘engaging’ communicates that this is a practice that we need to be intentional about. Developing a core group of people that we do life with is not something that happens by chance. We have to actively place ourselves in groups that cultivate this level of relationship. History tells us that after years of building isolated homesteads, the early pioneers started building homes closer to each other. They found that the isolation and loneliness effected not just their emotional health but also their health and well-being as well.

When I joined our church family five years ago, I was ready to hide away from life and just let the days pass me by. It was consistent encouragement and love from the the members of this community that helped me to regain hope and set my life back on course.

I echo the scripture in encouraging you to thoughtfully consider which activities you can be involved in at our church that will help you intentionally engage in our community.

Lord, I thank you for bringing me to FCC and I ask that you help me find the place where I fit in with this group of believers. I also ask that you help me to find ways to encourage others who are apart of my community.

**Morvin Dixon**  
**Assistant Pastor**

# Engage in Community

Thursday, Jan 17th

Caring for One Another

Ephesians 4:11-16

Family Christian Center exists to glorify God the Father by making disciples of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. As members, we play an invaluable role in the body by caring for others.

Ultimately, our faithfulness to Christ's commands affects the health of the body of Christ. In other words, if we care for others, the church will grow in maturity and unity in Christ. If we do not care for each other the church will suffer and eventually die as a local expression of the body of Christ.

Some ways we can care and reach out to people in our church body.

## **Pray for each other...**

This is the first, and most important thing we can do.

## **Understand them...**

Try to put yourself in their shoes, how would you want to be treated if you were in their situation. Show compassion.

## **Send a card or note...**

Let them know you are thinking of them, praying for them, that you are concerned.

## **Share a meal...**

Having a meal with someone is an intimate thing to do. Take them out or make a home cooked meal to share.

## **Listen...**

Really listen, ask questions. Connect, maintain eye contact, be fully engaged with them.

## **Help them...**

If you know of a need, volunteer to help. If it's a big need, ask others to join in.

## **Be intentional...**

There is always an opportunity to extend care. It takes effort, but it's always worth it!! Have a plan, be a giver.

## **Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit...**

Make yourself available to be His hands and feet. Recognize opportunities to care, you can change someone's day, week, or life!!!

Prayer

Father, we thank you for being a caring God, help each of us to be more like you each day, to reach out in your love, to those you put in our path.

**Timberly Tracy**  
**Head Custodian**

37 The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. 40 I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not." 41 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." 42 Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

"So, what has God been teaching you this week?" This question often came at me as a challenge from a young youth minister here at FCC, when I was in High School. Dustin Rubio had been transformed by the gospel of Jesus, and had committed his life to seeking after the Lord and encouraging others around him to do the same. Every few weeks, he would corner me at the church, look me right in the eyes, and ask me this question, and he would not let me go until I had given a good answer. Honestly, even though he intimidated me some, I appreciated the check in. I appreciated that he cared enough about me that he wasn't going to let me get away with slacking off in areas of faith.

This passage of scripture shows Jesus doing something similar with his disciples. I think that many could read this and think that Jesus is being harsh, and really doesn't seem to respect his disciples, or maybe even like them very much. But when I read it, I see something different. I remember how easy it is for me to become lazy in my walk with the Lord. I remember how, a lot of the time, I have known when I was not doing what God wants from me, and I was just waiting for someone to care enough to call me out on it and help me get back on track.

Building up our fellow believers often means that we offer a word of encouragement when times are tough, or a listening ear when the storms of life are blowing too strong, but it also means offering a loving challenge from time to time. Jesus was able to spur the disciples on to greater things, and also able to reveal the amazing greatness of God to all those who were witnessing as he healed the boy. In the same way, our challenges should be aimed at spurring one another towards greater faithfulness, always with the ultimate goal of glorifying our God.

"So, what has God been teaching YOU this week?"

God, we thank you for your sending your Son Jesus as a living example for us to follow. Help us to accept the loving challenges of our fellow believers and to boldly challenge one another to live more faithfully. Through it all, may you be given the Glory. Amen.

**Pastor Eli Tracy**  
**Assistant Pastor**

Proverbs 18:21 “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

Can we grasp the weight of that verse? What we say makes a difference! Our words are so very powerful. They have an incredible impact on those who hear them. Maybe that’s why it says in Ephesians 4:29 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” By my very words I can help someone. I can benefit someone. When we look at the flip side of this, how many people have been hurt, damaged or crippled just by things people said to them? Maybe we have been the recipient and have felt those damaging effects.

Hebrews 10:24 says to “...consider how we may spur one another on...”. Could we consider saying something or writing something (even something small) to affect another believer? It could have a major effect on their life. Mark Twain said, “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” Even going beyond our own words, we can even consider seeking the Lord to be able to hear and speak the words He wants us to say. According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, this can bring strength, encouragement and comfort to others.

Truly, our tongue is a powerful thing.

Lord, help me to use my tongue to bring life to fellow believers. Help me to allow You to use my mouth for encouraging, comforting and strengthening others. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

# **Building up Believers**

**Sunday, Jan 20th**

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

It's hard to notice growth when it is part of your everyday life. We have family we only see about once a year. Usually around the holidays. Everytime we see them the first thing out of their mouths is how big the kids are getting. We never notice how much they've grown until we are reminded of it. They grow a little every day and since we see them every day their growth goes unnoticed. That is how growth works. It's a little at a time over a long period of time. That is the best way to grow. One of my children grew super fast one year and you can probably guess the results. We nicknamed him trip because he kept tripping over his own feet. We vacationed at Hocking Hills and at all the trails by a cliff, I made him hold my hand. He was too old but it was better to have him a little embarrassed by holding my hand than to have a trip to the ER. Growth is vital in our walk with God. We should try everyday to be a little better than we were the day before. That is the only person we should try to be better than.

So how do we grow a little each day? First, just like eating and exercise we put daily disciplines in our lives that challenge us. (Prayer, Bible reading, fasting, and devotions) Be careful not to make it too challenging because you will become easily discouraged and give up but if it's not challenging at all you will not experience any growth. Second, have weekly and monthly accountability times where someone else challenges you in your growth. This is also a great time to assess whether you are over challenged and exhausting yourself or whether you aren't doing enough. Third, go to a Bible teaching church. A place where you feel slightly uncomfortable if you aren't growing. Last, avoid environments that tear you down. Did you know that you could be having fun ripping apart your spirit. Not all fun is bad but just because it's fun doesn't mean it's good. Be careful with your fun.

You and you alone are responsible for your growth. Don't allow the enemy to lie to you about that. It will definitely take time but you can be the spiritual giant you desire to be.

Ask God to teach you today and if you have the courage to ask, make sure you listen.

1 Tim. 4:15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.

**Pastor Andy Tracy**  
**Senior Pastor**

## **Building up Believers**

**Monday, Jan 21st**

“Ephesians 1:4 “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will”

Yes you do belong! God chose you! What a great thought God chose us, He wants to be our Lord and Savior. He wants the best for us. I recently read a book by Tony Evans “The power in the names of God”, he wrote about the name Adonai. This name of God denotes ownership, God owns us.. We find that hard to accept sometimes. When we think of being owned we think of the evils of slavery. That is not the kind of ownership implied by this name of God rather it implies a responsibility of God to take care of us. God wants to take care of our needs, He wants you to succeed in what he called you to do..

We must allow God to be our Adonai, He will not force us. We have to be willing to give up the control over our lives in order for God to take control. In your prayer time today ask God to take control of your life. Ask him to be your Adonai. He wants the best for you.

Take rest in knowing that God is in control. He’s got this, whatever this is.

You Belong!

**Mike Lewis  
Church Elder**

# **Building up Believers**

## **YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL**

**Tuesday, Jan 22nd**

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:29-32)

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.”  
Whoever came up with that crazy saying? Words can hurt deeply. Our words can tear people down or build them up. Hurtful words come from a hurting heart. That is why the Apostle Paul tells us to get rid of bitterness, rage, and anger.

But that is hard to do. We are hurt and bitterness builds. Then we pass it on and hurt someone else and they pass it on and hurt someone else, and it never ends. Our world becomes a dog-eat-dog world. Satan’s kingdom increases.

How do we get rid of bitterness, rage, and anger? It has to start with God! Through the cross we see the deep love, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness of God. We must walk in those truths daily, soaking up God’s love the way we soak up the sun on a beautiful day. Just like the sun energizes us, the Son can daily renew, refresh, and heal us. It is God’s love that allows us to let go of the hurts we have experienced today and replace those hurts with joy and peace. Then instead of passing on hurt, we begin to pass on God’s love. We start to “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” We start to build up others. Then the person we are kind and compassionate to passes it on to someone else, who passes it on to another, and God’s kingdom increases!

Let God’s love fill your mouth with words that build up rather than tear down and you will help to make this world a better place to live!

Prayer: “Lord, fill me with Your love today. Then let it flow from me in my actions and my words. May everything I say be “helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

**Pastor Dave Nofziger**  
**Church Counselor**

Empowerment has become a popular buzzword in business and management these days. However, throughout Christ's ministry he was committed to empowering others to do the work of ministry. God's planning is never random; His purpose for your life was set in place before you were born. We're reminded in Ephesians 1:4, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." God chose you for such a time as this, and He has a plan for your life.

Read the book of Esther in the Bible - It is a story of how God used one woman to save her people.

Esther was adopted by her uncle Mordecai, who loved her. The king had gotten rid of his wife for disobeying him, and so all the young women, including Esther, were brought to him so he could choose a new queen. For a year, each girl was pampered in preparation to meet the king.

Haman, one of the king's advisors, wanted to have all the Jews in the kingdom murdered, and he got the king to agree. Mordecai tells Esther to plead to the King for her people, the Jews, even though her identity as a Jew was a secret.

Esther 4:14, which says, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

We are empowered for a time such as this, what has God empowered you to do?

What are you passionate about?

What makes you so angry or frustrated that you want to see it changed?

Do you think that is what God has called you to do?

You have been Empowered to make a change!

**Pastor Buff Tracy**  
**Assistant Pastor**

# **Empower The Church**

## **We've been given a Gift!**

Thursday, Jan 24th

Today's Scripture Reading: Acts 1 & 2

Two things I believe with my whole heart and I am asking God to continually teach and remind me. The first is that as Christians we are not only called to represent Christ but that we are called to be carriers of His presence, and not just observers, that we may impact the world, rather than the world impacting us! The second truth comes from John 7: 37-39 where we are taught that when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, rivers of living water will flow from me. Not a river but rivers!!

That means that the Christian life is supposed to be more than accepting Jesus Christ and waiting for heaven up there. I don't only want heaven up there, but down here also! On earth as it is in heaven! When we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God becomes alive and simple, not a list of do's and don't's but reveals the simplicity, power and authority we have to walk out the Christian life and He gives us far more than we ask!! Non Christians can't help but take note in the difference of a power filled believer and a struggling Christian just trying to get by.

Simply put, I believe there are two different experiences when you accept Jesus. First, you have a relationship with God, a peace with God, and you know one day you will go to heaven. Second, when I came into the experience of the in-filling of the Holy Spirit, that was the time when God dealt with me in such a way that He used my life to overflow and reach others! That is when I was empowered and realized the authority that I as a believer have and all the gifts He has to offer to me.

I encourage you to seek today the gift of the Holy Spirit that is available to you! I encourage you today to access this gift continually! It is the power you need to be a witness for Christ Jesus! If you would like to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit be assured, it is yours for the asking! I would be thrilled to pray with you if you would like!

Prayer: Help me to trust You, Lord, keeping it simply and allowing You to do Your work in my life. I give you permission Holy Spirit, to Your way in my life. I want to come into the fullness of Your power, and as the Bible says, that I be grounded deeper and deeper in love. First with You Papa and then out of my belly, the rivers of love that only You can give for others. Amen

**Diane Davenport**

One of my favorite scriptures is Matthew 7:24 “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” The power of the word is a very real thing in the life of a Christian. God gave us the word of God as a guide/manual to give us the power to succeed in this life. The word of God is the key to everything in your life. It is the key to contentment, peace, joy, patience or any other area you may struggle in.

Jesus said to hear and do. He gave us the secret to an effective and power filled existence in this very profound teaching about the house that’s built on the rock as opposed to the sand. The same storm hit both houses and yet, only one of them stood and that was the house that was built on the rock. We see people face almost identical trials, one stands through them and one never makes it.

When you know the word of God and know how to act on it, you get God involved. When you get God involved, you create an environment for miracles. The scripture teaches us to meditate in the word day and night so that we can do what is written in it. That recipe causes us to make our way prosperous and causes us to have good success. Hearing the word is not enough, you have to apply it to your life.

The words spoken by our Lord are empowering. The Word of God has true power so hear it and do it.

Matthew 17:20 New International Version (NIV)

20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

God uses our smallest effort for his grand purpose. There is a concept that I have heard over and over in my life, and it is this: All that it takes to do something great is 10-seconds of courage. I do not have to be fearless at all times. I do not have to have all the answers at all times. I do not have to be strong at all times. Most of the time, it just takes a little bit of courageous action to make all the difference.

God uses our smallest effort for his grand purpose. Pastor Andy often teaches on the way in which God reveals his plan for our lives, which is simply one step at a time. How often do we wish that we knew all that was to come, but God is infinitely wise and so only gives us what we can handle. He requires only one small step at a time, and through that faithful walk, the kingdom of heaven grows.

God uses our smallest effort for his grand purpose. God does not require unshakable, doubtless, unwavering faith the size of a mountain. God takes our small, and sometimes fragile faith, and plants it as a seed, which he then multiplies into incredible fruitfulness! Be encouraged, the Lord knows the inner workings of our hearts and is faithful to his word. Live a life of small moments of faith, knowing that we serve a God who moves in the smallness of our lives for his grand purpose!

**Pastor Eli Tracy**  
**Assistant Pastor**

# Empower The Church

Sunday, Jan 27th

Eph. 4:11-12 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Growing up I always thought the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were given to do the work of the ministry but that is wrong. They are given to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. That is all of us, including you. They are a gift to you to prepare you for the work of the ministry.

I love coaching. It is one of my favorite things to do, but in coaching I am actually never in the game. Every year we have tournaments that are extremely challenging and I have kids on my team that aren't equipped to handle the high level of competition. That does not mean they are not on the team but they will not wrestle in that particular match because I don't want them to get hurt. I also have tournaments that are set up only for wrestlers that are beginners and I have kids I don't allow to wrestle because their skill level is too high and I don't want to over use them and wear them out. The neat thing about a team is that everybody has their place.

That is the same in the body of Christ. God has equipped you for a certain work in the body. If you don't do your part we all miss out. As a coach not only does everybody have their place but every player on my team is valuable and one is missing we are worse off. So many kids don't understand their value and the same goes for the saints. You are valuable and important. Do your job. You are a minister of the Gospel. You are plan A and there is no plan B.

Pray and ask God to show you someone or someday you can minister today.

1 Cor. 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

**Pastor Andy Tracy**  
**Senior Pastor**

