

Become

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Date: 02 February 2025

Preacher: Ray Sweet

[0:00] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweep from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, if you'd like to learn more, you can go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in to the preaching of God's Word today. And our heart is always to get right into that Word, but let that Word get right into us and change these hearts. Now, do you remember from your childhood who you wanted to be like? For me, there were a couple people. First was my dad. Man, I hit the jackpot on the dad lottery. And boy, did I have my dad as a superhero-itis as a kid. And you know what? I still kind of do. And I can remember several times on the school bus arguing with other kids that my dad could beat up their dad.

And while they disagreed, they were wrong. Because my dad was the karate champion, the demolition derby champ. And honestly, really just a nice and caring man who really didn't want to beat up anybody.

[1:01] He was a mechanic they trusted with their vehicles and knew he'd treat them right. A hardworking man of integrity. And then second, I wanted to be like Mike. How many of you remember that Gatorade commercial from 1991 that was all about being like Michael Jordan?

And being from a basketball state like Indiana, I wanted to be just like him. And when I was young, I practiced hard. I went after that dream to no avail. But I'm telling you, Mike is the GOAT.

The greatest of all time. And I wanted to be just like him. I've often joked that if I could just have his athletic ability and skill for one day, man, I'd be down at the YMCA dunking on some people.

But I got to wondering, who did you want to be like when you were a kid? So I did what any sensible human does. I went to Facebook and I asked.

And here's some responses I got. I had quite a few, like me, say a parent. One guy said his uncle who was an elder at his church. Several mentioned different relatives like a sibling, an aunt, uncle, grandma, grandpa.

[2:09] A guy I went to Bible college with said he wanted to be a professional baseball player. And then two others listed Hall of Famers like Ted Williams and Kirby Puckett.

One lady said the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. A fellow pastor in town said that he wanted to be like Popeye the Sailor Man. Boop, boop. A couple of others listed teachers that they had in school.

Even the blonde lady off of Hee Haw. A meteorologist. The trapeze girl at the circus. The famous wrestler Dick the Bruiser. And probably my favorite answer from a man in our church.

He said he wanted to be like the guy on the back of the garbage truck who ran the squisher. We've all had people we admired even though they were far from perfect.

But today we're going to talk about becoming like the one who is perfect in every way. It's hard to believe we are already in week number four of our series called DNA.

[3:10] We're looking at our unique spiritual DNA here at FCC. If you'd like to catch up in the series you can always go to the website. But real quick.

We've talked about the vision. The why we do what we do. And that is Jesus first. Above tradition. Beyond the way we've always done it.

Above man-made creeds. Jesus first in everything. And then we jumped into the how. The mission. How do we put him first? Belong to.

So we talked about that belonging in Christ and with other believers. Believe in. That plan of salvation last week. And then today become like Jesus.

While I know some people use the word religion in a good way. You probably won't hear me use that word a lot. Other than to say that we're called to more than a religion.

[4 : 07] Because there's a lot of religions in the world that are not good. That are not guided by the truth that is found in God's word. They don't lead to eternal paradise. But we are called to a relationship with Jesus that changes everything.

So I guess you could say that's what separates the religious versus those who come all in surrendered to Christ. And begin that biblical process of becoming more like him every day. So if belonging to Jesus is what is often called in the theological circles as prevenient grace. Where God pursued me even as a sinner.

If believing in Jesus is justifying grace. Where we are justified and forgiven and made right in Christ. Covered by his blood.

Walking in his salvation. Then today is what is called sanctifying grace. Not an attempt to earn salvation. Because that is only by faith in the grace of God.

[5 : 10] But because of what Jesus did on the cross. And by that empty tomb. That's what propels me to live and grow in Christ every day.

Being molded by the Holy Spirit into his image. Listen, this isn't a sprint as much as we sometimes want it to be. This is a one day at a time marathon of spiritual growth and maturity.

And there are going to be hills and valleys. There are going to be twists and turns and ups and downs. And victories and failures along the way. And boy am I thankful for a God who doesn't give up on us.

Nor does he forsake us. A God whose mercies are new every day. And a Savior who picks us back up. Dusts us off. And puts us back on that straight and narrow path to live for him.

So, if you're a note taker today. Here's one way you can access our sermon outline. You can go to the YouVersion Bible app. It's absolutely free.

[6 : 08] It's amazing. YouVersion Bible app. You can download that. Go under events. Under First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana. And then you'll see our outline.

But here's the first thing. We must have a heart to seek the Lord. We must have a heart to seek the Lord. So, let's start with two passages that I think are going to help us kind of frame our thinking a little bit.

First is a passage that has just become our 6th through 12th grade youth ministry theme verse. It's also inspired their new name, which is 220.

220. If you think about it, it means second to none. Really cool. And it goes right along with our Jesus first vision.

But that 220 comes from Galatians chapter 2 verse 20 that puts it like this. I have been crucified with Christ. And I no longer live.

[7 : 09] 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. And then we go to Colossians 2, 6 and 7.

Where the Apostle Paul through the Holy Spirit says, So then, just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him.

So it's this picture of, okay, when you came to Christ, your sin bombarded you and your eyes were opened and you saw this need for a Savior.

And you wanted to be with Him on this earth and for all eternity. And so just as passionately as maybe you took that step out of the pew and you walked down the aisle with that same excitement, with that same desperation to know Him, He says, continue to live your lives in Him.

So that same passion has to drive us to be molded more like Jesus every day. And then verse 7 says, rooted and built up. So a cool picture of, I'm going deeper with Jesus every day.

[8 : 17] I'm growing in Him every day. And then it says, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and in everything overflowing with thankfulness. Woo! Man, those are some powerful Holy Spirit-led words that challenge us to do more than just play church or establish a country club or make it about a set of rules.

Instead, grow, baby, grow! Pursue the heart of Christ. Don't just want Him for salvation. Desire Him for sanctification. Maturing every day in our walk in love for Him as we walk in the fruits of the Spirit even more.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Attributes that we all want more of that are only found as you go deeper in your relationship with

Christ.

Now, I remember early in our first ministry, Bethany and I were probably in our mid-20s. We were playing hide-and-seek with the youth kids in the church. I don't know if that's right or not, but we were doing it.

And we all were hiding. And whoever was seeking found everyone except for my wife. And we looked everywhere, thinking maybe she cheated and left or something.

[9 : 34] Finally, we all yelled out, Okay, Bethany, you win. Come out. And that's when I learned that those communion tables are often hollow. They have a hole in the back. So she had climbed into the communion table that we all thought was solid because it fit up against the stage perfectly.

You could not tell. She pushed it back up against the stage, and she sat in there for so long knowing no one would find her. She did a masterful job of hiding, and we did a terrible job of seeking.

So with that idea of hiding and seeking, let's bring this back to the heart of Christ here. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 7, starting in verse 7. Ask, and it will be given to you.

Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds. And to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Now, in their book, Evidence for Joy, Josh McDowell and Dale Bellis said, If you have an honest heart, an appetite for truth, and an openness to God's Spirit, you will be gratified by the results.

[10 : 43] See, becoming like Jesus starts with hearts that truly desire to seek Him. And the reason so many come to Christ is because we come to this hard realization that my ways aren't working.

If we're honest here today, most of our stories of coming to Jesus started in a pit. Because my ways lead to confrontation. My ways lead to isolation.

My ways lead to anger and sadness and frustration. My ways lead to emptiness. And yet, when we come to Christ, and I leave my ways behind, it's amazing how a heart seeking to love and follow Him, man, it changes everything.

And that's where this process of sanctification, of becoming more like Jesus, that's where that starts. A heart that seeks to know Christ intimately.

And then second, we must make a commitment to disciplines. To the spiritual disciplines. You know, it starts with a heart to know Him deeply, and then it comes out in action.

[11 : 50] Because listen, we all know this, talk is cheap, right? A lot of people do it. A lot of people have big dreams, but fewer put in the work to make it happen. And don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that good deeds or working hard get you to heaven.

Only the blood of Jesus does that. But I'm talking about spending time with Him. Making the Lord a priority in practical ways. Not just saying I love Him, but showing it.

By making that commitment to spiritual disciplines that help me grow into His presence more and more every day. For example, just like many of your occupations, being a pastor of a church can be a very demanding role.

And I don't think I've ever worked 40 hours a week in ministry. That would feel like a part-time job. And because my role requires me to be gone a lot from home, even on call 24-7, I have to be very careful in how I balance my time.

Sometimes I do better than others, but I always know when my wife says, Hey, we need a date night. I'm like, okay. All right. I'm not balancing very well. I need to make sure my priorities are God first, my wife, then my kids, then my ministry.

[13 : 00] And the hard part is I have to let the people-pleasing side go. I've had to learn with disappointing folks at times and even say no to some good things in order to say yes to the best things.

And I have learned that this valuable phrase, you make time for what's most important. So let's go even deeper. You make time for what really sits on the throne of your heart.

And hear me, there's nothing more important than your relationship with Jesus and growing in Him. And when I say Jesus first, that means that He gets the first fruits of everything, including my time. Because remember, when He's first, everything else falls into place. 1 Corinthians 9, verse 24 and 25. It gives us a pretty good picture of an athlete, a runner, who obviously is getting in good shape so they can perform at their very best.

And then Paul brings it back to our relationship with Christ. Here's what he says. Do you not know that in a race, all the runners run? But only one gets the prize. And then he says, run in such a way

as to get the prize.

[14:07] Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last. But we do it to get a crown that will last forever. So two words.

Two words really jumped out at me in this passage. Strict training. So like an athlete who eats right, works out hard, rests well, and so much more, a Jesus first church or a Jesus first Christian accomplishes that by choosing to become like him.

And to do that, we go into strict training. Not legalism, not burdensome religious duty, but the joy of salvation, pursuing the heart of Christ, finding our purpose and our hope and our contentment in him alone.

So, you've kind of set us up, pastor. So what does that look like? Well, back to the basics, okay? Back to the fundamentals. Let's just be extremely practical here.

And as John Maxwell has said, there's an old saying, champions don't become champions in the ring. They are merely recognized there. If you want to see where someone develops into a champion, look at his or her daily routine.

[15:16] So those habits, those daily patterns matter, right? And I'm going to be fairly quick talking through some of this today, but there is a classic book on this subject called Celebration of Discipline.

Celebration of Discipline by Richard J. Foster that can really help you understand spiritual disciplines better. But let's get real practical. It starts by getting into the Word of God, having a translation of the Bible that you can understand and dig into every day.

We use the New International Version here at the church, the NIV, but there's several great translations that we often recommend, like the English Standard Version, the ESV, the New American Standard Bible, the NASB, the New Living Translation, if you'd like a little bit of a lower reading level, the NLT, and there's more.

And if you're one of those people who read the Bible through in a year, that's great. But please know, if you need to slow down and read a chapter a day and just really just like focus on those words hardcore, that may even be better for you if you're newer to your walk especially.

So it's so important that we, and I'm not perfect at this either, but that we make it a priority every day to get into the Word and let truth wash over us and change us.

[16:39] It's also very important that you're in a Bible study of some sort. We offer several things here at the church, like Sunday schools, small groups, Wednesday elevate classes, and more.

But we also know that the kingdom of God is so much bigger than us. And there is a great, there are some great Bible-believing studies that happen at other churches and other spots in the community. Find one.

Find one that works for your schedule and go deeper. Church, it is vital, not just important, but vital that we are daily in the Word of God for ourselves, that we are weekly with others, letting the Word shape our hearts and our lives into the image of Christ.

We'll talk even more about this next week when we start into our core values. And then next is prayer. Prayer is your lifeline of communication with your Heavenly Father.

And you don't have to go through anyone else because you have been invited right into the throne room because of the blood of Jesus Christ, because of grace. Yeah, is it sometimes nice to pray with others?

[17:39] Absolutely. There's power when God's people pray together. But we as children of God are invited daily before the One who spoke everything into existence out of nothing, ex nihilo.

And as we approach Him in prayer, we realize that this is our Abba Father, our Daddy. There's an intimacy. There's a closeness there. But we also approach Him with reverence and awe, that He's the holy, majestic, omnipotent, omniscient God of the universe.

And I understand the ADD nature that probably all of us have at times in prayer, right? It's easy to start off praying and by the end, you're making a grocery list in your head. This is why it's good to have a prayer journal.

Or maybe do something on your phone and write down all the things that you want to pray for as people mention them to you. I also, myself, and this isn't the only way to pray, but I like a prayer method called the ACTS prayer, the A-C-T-S prayer.

So you start off, the A stands for adoration. So you're giving the glory to God, the one that you are approaching. Some people like to recite the names of God and His attributes that make Him God.

[18 : 57] Others sing worship music to Him. Adore Him because He's worthy. And then after you worship Him, next comes confession. Confess those sins before Him.

Give them to Him. Thank Him for forgiveness and ask for His strength to crucify that flesh. The T stands for thanksgiving. What specifically in your life are you thankful for?

It's easy to forget those blessings. Tell Him about it. And then last, our hearts are prepared now to bring our supplications, a big word for our requests, before Him.

And big or small, He wants them all. He cares. What a blessing we have to approach our God in prayer. We could also talk about spiritual disciplines like worship and community with other believers, doing life together, stewardship of our time and our talents and our treasures.

As I often say to those that I meet with about giving their hearts to Christ and getting baptized, you have to establish the right habits, putting yourself in the right places with the right people that are going to help you grow.

[20 : 06] And then last, we must desire to serve. We must desire to serve the Lord in our giftedness. An important part of becoming like Jesus is putting others before ourselves, serving with excellence.

One of my favorite stories in the New Testament is right before the Passover festival. As Jesus' time is coming close, He takes off His outer garment and He does a job reserved in that culture for the lowest of servants.

God in the flesh pours water into a bowl and He begins to wash His disciples' feet. Now, let's just paint the full picture here.

These people walked everywhere they went. Their feet were exposed. Whatever the terrain looked like, whatever the elements they were walking in, it was caked all over their feet. And Jesus humbled Himself, washing those nasty, grimy, stinky feet.

And then He says this to them in John 13, Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you.

[21 : 15] So it starts with that changed heart, selflessly caring about others above myself. And we even see a call to serve in 1 Peter 4, 10 and 11.

It says, Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God.

If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength that God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever.

Amen. So a part of becoming like Jesus is loving and serving people like Jesus did. And I can tell you it takes at least, at least 100 people serving in some capacity for us to pull off a Sunday morning.

Three worship services, classes for all ages, child care, Holy Grounds Cafe, Connection Point, greeters, praise teams, staff, safety team, the list goes on. That doesn't even consider all the things we do during the week, especially with Wednesday Night Elevate.

[22 : 22] And then you add in all the special events, the dinners and leadership teams. And it really does take all of us to work together to do what God has called us to do.

And one mindset we have to continue to squash is one I've seen way too many people that love Jesus do. This is where the congregation has the ideas and the pastors and the leaders are the ones who always have to make it happen.

And that doesn't fit the biblical definition of service. It doesn't fit priesthood of all believers. That doesn't match these passages we just read. And as an eldership, we want you to serve where you're passionate.

Because when it's done with excellence, if that happens to be a ministry we currently have going, great! Let's get you signed up. If you have new ideas, just know that God put them on your heart for a reason.

And if we're in agreement that this matches our spiritual DNA, be ready to take the lead because you would do such a better job than me with a ministry God has put on your heart to do.

[23 : 29] So I want to encourage you to get plugged in. If you have questions or you want to talk a little more about how you can get plugged in, give Pastor Steve a call in the office here at 663-8488.

Or you can chat with him on a Sunday after a service. But let's zoom back out a little bit here as we kind of come to a close. If there's a guy in the New Testament who kind of gets a bad rap too much, in my opinion, it's probably the Apostle Peter.

Yeah, he was pretty rough when he came to Jesus. He did some boneheaded things. His mouth wrote checks. His behind couldn't cash. He even denied Jesus three times when the heat got turned up.

And yet Jesus didn't give up on him like he hasn't given up on us. He saw the potential. He saw the sincerity of Peter's heart. And when Peter thought that he could no longer follow Jesus because he had failed him, how many of us think the same way sometimes?

Jesus made it known that he still had a purpose. His purpose was to feed the Lord's sheep. And pretty quickly after Jesus ascended and the Holy Spirit descended upon believers, Peter's boldness and faith came oozing out.

[24 : 35] He kind of took the lead among the Apostles. And at Pentecost alone, he helped to lead thousands to Christ. He continued to not be perfect, but to grow one day at a time.

And he went on to be one of the greatest, most patient, spiritually mature leaders the church has ever probably known. And when the heat got turned up again and his life was on the line for his faith in Christ, this time he stayed true.

And as history records, he was crucified upside down because he said he wasn't worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord and Savior Jesus. Church, one thing that separates a healthy church from a church that's just trying to fill pews and impress others is a commitment to biblical discipleship.

This commitment to becoming like Jesus more every day. So, just like me as a little boy wanting to be like Mike, even better, let's make that choice to run after the heart of God and become like Jesus.

Pray with me. Heavenly Father, we are just so grateful for your word that just speaks truth over us. I'm so thankful for this FCC family and just the vision, the mission, and the values that you've given us, that you have shown us, that need to kind of guide us as we go forward.

[26 : 04] Thank you for the word of God that everything is based out of. And I just pray, Lord, as we are walking through our vision and our mission, and next week we start into our core values, that you will just help us to follow you wherever you lead.

We don't want it to be about us. We want it to be all about you and your kingdom. So, Father, I also pray right now over those who are listening. If there's anyone who doesn't know you, Father, I just pray for your power over them and I pray that they, whoever you send in their path, they will come to know your salvation that changes everything.

Thank you, Jesus, for what you did on the cross for each of us. Thank you for the hope that you give. Help us to be all in with you. Help us to be committed to becoming just like you.

We pray all of this in Jesus' precious and holy name. And God's people said, amen and amen. Hey, real quick, if you have any questions about your faith, have any questions about following Jesus, you want to know more about the church, you can reach out to us in a couple simple ways.

First, you can always call the church office. Once again, we're First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. My name is Ray. You could ask for me. But go ahead and call 812-663-8488.

[27 : 26] That's 812-663-8488. Or you can email me at ray at FCCgreensburg.com. Hey, God bless you. Thank you for tuning in today.

And we hope that you have a tremendous week.