

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Back to Normal Better - What the World Needs Now

June 28, 2021

Normal. It's probably been the most popular word of the last sixteen months. In the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, all the talk was about the "new normal." Then, as the crazy year of 2020 continued, many started clamoring to "return to normal." Now, all the talk is about how we are "finally getting back to normal."

Don't get me wrong; I'm pumped to return to sold-out concerts and (not-so-sold-out) Detroit Lions games. I'm excited to give handshakes and hugs again. And I am relieved to finally see faces in stores and at weekend services! But I also think that, in our quest to return to normal, we run the risk of missing what God wants to teach us—and the fruit he wants to produce in our lives during this season.

In last weekend's message, Pastor Jud Wilhite asked, "How tragic would it be if we went back to normal without changing at all?" Later he said: "I don't want to get back to normal; I want to get back to better."

How do we "get back to better" spiritually? Should we try harder to do more good and be better people? Nope. If you've ever tried that (like I have), you know it doesn't work. So instead, the way we "get back to better" is by living from God's Spirit and allowing him to produce faithfulness in our lives.

What is faithfulness? Jud put it this way: "Faithfulness is often defined as faith—placing faith in God and others. In this instance, though, it appears to be a faith that allows others to rely on us. It's not trust, but it's trustworthiness—the solid dependability of those that keep their promises and finish their tasks."

A faithful person is one who can be counted on and trusted. They are diligent, they complete what they start, and they always come through in critical situations. Who wouldn't want to be a person of faithfulness?

No matter how much we might want to be a faithful person, the reality is we can only ever be faithful to the degree we understand and internalize how faithful Jesus first has been to us. He is the ultimate example of faithfulness. Jesus was a trustworthy friend and leader to his disciples. He could always be

counted on in times of need. And in his greatest display of faithfulness, he dutifully carried out his mission: to die on a cross, take our sins upon himself, and defeat all our sins once and for all!

When we recognize how faithful Jesus has been to us, we can begin allowing the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of faithfulness in our lives.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Questions:

How would your life be different if you become more faithful?

How would our world be different if we all became more faithful?

Next Steps:

Spend five minutes reflecting on how Jesus has been faithful throughout your life.

Identify one area of your life where God's calling you to grow in faithfulness.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to continue to produce the fruit of faithfulness in your life.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for giving us the ultimate example of faithfulness when you died on the cross and took our sins. Please continue the good work you began within us so we can display your faithfulness to our world. Amen.

Simple, Healthy Daily Habits - What the World Needs Now

June 29, 2021

Last weekend, we continued our series *What our World Needs Now* with the fruit of the Spirit of faithfulness. The bottom line was: **God's BETTER FUTURE is made possible by today's FAITHFUL ACTIONS.**

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder said that what we do every day determines who we become someday. He also noted that faithfulness is the key to moving toward the better God has for us.

Luke 16:10

"If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities."

In this passage, Jesus warned the disciples to be faithful in the small things. As Christ-followers, we must realize we are answerable to God and that faithfulness in small things will result in permanent riches. If we are not faithful with small things, there will be no reward!

Guest speaker Pastor Jud Wilhite said that simple, healthy, daily habits are an aspect of faithfulness because, whether good or bad, habits run our daily lives.

Habit is defined as "a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up." It was once thought that it takes 21 days to form a habit. However, new research suggests it can take anywhere from 18 to 254 days, with an average of 66 days, for a new behavior to become an automatic habit.

Pastor Jud shared some advice from James Clear's book *Atomic Habits*, offering three levels of change and how to move through them.

Levels of change:

1. Goals: "I want..."
2. If there is something you want to accomplish, start simply by setting a goal. Some of us are good at setting goals but aren't necessarily good at keeping them. It is easy to set a goal, but the desired

outcome will not be accomplished if there is no follow-through (faithfulness).

3. Habits: "I will..."
4. A habit is one small change you can make with a big dose of faithfulness. Faithfulness is the key to this step—it adds commitment to the goals you've set. You need to break the goal down into small daily activities that will lead to accomplishing the goal. Sticking with these daily activities leads to the third level of change.
5. Identity: "I am..."
6. This level of change takes your daily automatic habits and makes them part of who you are. You are no longer just someone doing daily tasks toward a goal; you become the goal that you set. This is the most powerful level of change. Clear states, *"You don't rise to the levels of your goals; you fall to the levels of your systems."* Pastor Jud added, *"You fall to the level of your habits as well."*

2 Chronicles 15:7

But as for you, be strong and courageous, for your work will be rewarded.

Questions:

Would you describe yourself as a faithful person? If not, what is one small daily change you can make and carry out with *faithfulness*?

Are you good at setting goals? If so, are you good at following through with those goals?

Next Steps:

Look at your life over the last year and determine any core habits that helped sustain you. Now, review Clear's levels of change and set one or two new goals.

Check out cedarcreek.tv/world to access this series's weekend messages and mid-week podcast on the Fruit of the Spirit.

Prayer:

Dear Father in heaven, open my eyes to see where I need to grow in faithfulness. Keep me steadfast in my daily habits, so they become part of my identity—my identity as found in you. Grant me wisdom to hear the changes you desire so that I may live out your plan for my life. Please help me to trust that you will produce in me what can only be produced through the Holy Spirit. Keep my

heart pure in the small things so that I will be entrusted with greater things. In Jesus' glorious name, amen.

This post was written by Jennifer Macke, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Habit is Ten Natures - What the World Needs Now

June 30, 2021

British educator and educational reformer Charlotte Mason said, "Habit is ten natures." She believed that when we develop good habits in our children, and ourselves, we will have "smooth, easy days." Our modern sensibilities may have trouble with her quote, but basically, she says that it will overcome your natural tendencies when you develop a good habit. I don't know about you, but my natural tendency is to lay in bed and hit snooze when my alarm goes off. I also prefer reading a book to exercising, but that does not mean that those natural tendencies are best for my family or me. Mason goes on to say, "Habit is inevitable. If we fail to ease life by laying down habits of right thinking and right acting, habits of wrong thinking and wrong acting fix themselves of their own accord." (*The Philosophy of Education*, p. 101) In other words, when we fail to develop good habits, we will fall into bad habits, for creatures of habit are we.

Developing a habit is hard work. Last weekend, Pastor Jud Wilhite said it takes between 14 to 200-plus days to establish a habit. That's quite a range; however, other experts on habits say it takes about 21 days to develop a habit. So why should we put forth the effort to go against our natural tendencies to create a good habit? Because, as Jud said, "What you do every day determines who you will become someday." So who do you want to be next month, next year, or in ten years? Do you want to be known for your habits of prayer and reading your Bible? How do you want to feel? Do you have children or grandchildren who look up to you? Who do you want them to see you as?

I used to be great at getting up early to exercise and read my Bible. I developed the habit of getting out of bed when my alarm went off at 5:30 to catch a few quiet moments before my children got up. However, somewhere between child number five and now, that habit has disappeared. I am lucky to be out of bed and functional by 6:30. I set my alarm for 6, but I inevitably hit the snooze button and wake up closer to 7. It does not start my day off well. I'm usually rushed and then annoyed when my children are up and ready for breakfast before the coffee has even been ground. Admittedly, after five children in seven years, I was horribly sleep-deprived, and I needed sleep. But now, my youngest is three and sleeping through the night. At this point, I'm either going to bed too late or being lazy.

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder challenged us to pick a small habit and stick with it for the next 21 days. For me, I'm going to get out of bed when my alarm goes off without hitting snooze. My goal will be to do it every day during the week. I know that my days start better when I have that time alone in the morning. So what is it for you? Do you need to develop the habit of reading your Bible every day? Start with one chapter each day. You will eventually finish reading the Bible with that plan. Do you need more physical activity? Make a goal to spend 15 minutes outside most days, rain or shine. Do you need to cultivate the habit of joy? Choose to sing one hope-inducing song every day.

The change doesn't have to be huge. Instead, make it something so small that it would be hard not to do it. I guarantee once you begin with a small habit, it will grow—and instead of one chapter, you will be reading two chapters or more. You will find yourself looking for ways to get outside more or find yourself singing throughout the day.

Luke 16:10

"If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities."

When we develop small habits, they add up. Whether or not you choose your habits, you will develop them. You can intentionally choose to bring yourself closer to God through good habits or unintentionally choose to drift away by not mastering yourself. It's your choice.

Questions:

What do you want to be known for in one year? In 10 years? What habits can you identify in your life? Are they habits that bring you closer to God and your goals, or are they pushing you away?

Next Steps:

Choose a practical and simple habit to develop over the next 21 days. Ask someone to help keep you accountable.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for caring about how we live our lives. Thank you for giving us the ability to develop good habits and to change bad habits. Please give us the strength over these next few weeks to choose a habit that will draw us closer to you. Give us your power to follow through on our commitments and

develop faithfulness. In Jesus' name, amen.

This post was written by Julie Mabus, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

The Great Finisher - What the World Needs Now

July 1, 2021

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder extended a challenge to commit to something with faithfulness: relationally, spiritually, or personally. Whatever that may be, submit to it by praying and taking the next step. So often, when we commit to doing something, we take on the challenge all by ourselves. If we try hard enough, we believe we can get ourselves to the finish line. Instead of trying to accomplish things independently, though, God invites us to receive from the Holy Spirit. He is the one that produces faithfulness in our lives.

This summer, I have some lofty goals that I want to accomplish. I want to get back into a good routine and have fun. So, to reach this goal, I decided to start a young adult volleyball group. It was easy for me to plan, but I had to start sending invites to young adults to be faithful to the plan.

I have not had as many people come as I've invited—it's been less than 10. It can be disappointing when you reach out, and not many show up, or when you are faithful to something, and you do not see the results you wanted. So as I move forward, I must remember that the Holy Spirit produces the faithfulness I need to carry out his plan.

Knowing God has been so faithful in the past, I trust he will be faithful with this goal. I trust the Holy Spirit will guide and work in our hearts through this Group, and I rest on God's faithfulness to me. As Ben shared this weekend, we will only be faithful to the degree that we remember God is faithful with us.

Philippians 1:6

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

As I remember that God is the great finisher and has been faithful to me, I am empowered to be faithful in showing up every week to be a part of the work that God has started.

Questions:

How has God been faithful to you?

What do you want to accomplish by Labor Day?

What transformative work have you seen the Holy Spirit produce in your life when you have been faithful?

Next Steps:

Challenge yourself to make a goal.

Be a part of something, whether it's a Group, serving during a weekend service, or on Serve Day next month.

Prayer:

God, you are so faithful! Thank you for the certainty that you will continue the work you have started in my life and in others. I pray that the Holy Spirit will produce in me what I can't do on my own. I know there are times when I forget or doubt your faithfulness—remind me of this as I take the time to pray about a goal that I am challenging myself to achieve. Help me put aside my striving efforts and remember how faithful you have been in the past and will be going forward. I trust you, God, and believe you will finish what you started. In Jesus' name, amen.

This post was written by Becca Roberts, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

God's Kids, God's Power - What the World Needs Now

July 2, 2021

In last weekend's message and throughout this week's LivingItOut, we have seen ways we can be faithful. Hopefully, that has propelled many of us to initiate some changes and take some small, intentional steps to start moving toward a goal. However, it may have also stirred some feelings of regret or failure in areas where we may not have been faithful. Jud Wilhite, the lead pastor from Central Church in Las Vegas, powerfully touched on this at the end of his talk last weekend.

Jud reminded us of our identity—that it is rooted in CHRIST, not in what we have done or haven't done, but in what HE has done. He conveyed that we are MORE than any failure, pain, mistake, or shortcoming. He declared that “we are God's kids, and he has a future for us.”

1 John 3:1

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!

[Galatians 3:26](#) also points out that we “are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

God's love is displayed in his faithfulness, so in return, we aim to be faithful to God. We heard previously in the series, “You will only be ____ (fill in the blank) to the degree that you know God is _____ with you.” Let's plug in the word faithful here: **You will only be faithful to the degree that you know God is faithful with you.**

One thing for certain: God is faithful.

He is faithful to provide, to heal, to help, to repair, and to enable. When we surrender to Jesus to let him lead our life, we have forgiveness of all of our sins and shortcomings. But we also have the power of the Holy Spirit living in us, enabling us to take steps in the right direction continuously. This week, we have heard many suggestions regarding steps to take or small changes to make toward more holy living and toward an abundant life in and for Christ. We are not left to do this on our own. The Holy Spirit gives us the strength and ability to

complete his will in our lives because we're God's kids, and he has a future for us.

Questions:

Do you feel frustrated with past failures, shortcomings, or pain? Do you find your identity rooted in those things or rooted in Christ and who HE says you are?

Next Steps:

If you haven't already, identify one or two areas where you can grow in faithfulness. But, instead of relying on yourself to achieve these steps or goals, take a moment before you start to PRAY. Ask God for his Holy Spirit to give you strength (It's available to you and me!), to give you discipline in the area you're focusing on, and grace to push through when it gets difficult or seems impossible. Remember, "I can do EVERYTHING through CHRIST who gives me strength." ([Philippians 4:13](#))

Prayer:

God, we thank you for this message and the encouragement that we received last weekend and throughout this week. We call out to you for forgiveness for where we've fallen short and beg for your strength and grace as we take steps in a direction that is honoring to you. You are SO faithful! Please help us to be faithful in these small yet intentional steps before us. We TRUST you for what you're going to do in us and through us. In Jesus' name, amen.

This post was written by Kendra Grubinski, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.