

My family started a new rule in the house. No TV, Computer games, video games, anything electronic after 6 p.m. After 6 p.m., the kids can do their homework, as a family we can play board games, but anything we do, does not require electronics.

Well, this past Monday, we worked on homework after 6 p.m. Aaron and I worked on adding and subtracting fractions, and when he finished, (at 7:30 p.m., he went off and got his bath.) Alayna then came to me with her study guide for her language arts test the next day.

Alayna had vocabulary words, and she had to read a story. This story was about trees. She told me she was stuck on # 2. We read it. It asked Alayna, "What is unusual about trees and how they grow?"

She couldn't figure it out. So we went back to the story and I said, "Somewhere Alayna on this page you will find out the answer." I said, "This is opposite of what how humans grow." She finally got the answer, "Trees stop growing in autumn and begin to grow again in the spring." I said, it's unusual right? Do humans stop growing in autumn and then we start growing again in spring? She started to laugh and said, "Dad!"

It's a good thing that we don't stop growing right? I mean not just physically, I am talking about emotionally and spiritually too! What would happen if we all stopped growing spiritually?

What do you think church would look like? (let the people answer).

We are going to read today from Romans 12:1-12, just a few chapters ahead of where we were last week.

I really like this chapter of Romans. Paul takes chapter 12 through 16 and delivers a message for the people as to how to live and behave as redeemed people in a fallen world. In this chapter, we will see the keys to growth!

Romans 12:1-12

Place Your Life Before God

¹⁻² So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life —your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Pastor Jeff St. Clair

February 7, 2010

Romans 12:1-12

³ I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

⁴⁻⁶ In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

⁶⁻⁸ If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

⁹⁻¹⁰ Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

¹¹⁻¹³ Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

As I read this selection of Scripture, I keep singing in my head, Matthew West's "Motions" song.

This might hurt, it's not safe
But I know that I've gotta make a change
I don't care if I break,
At least I'll be feeling something
'Cause just okay is not enough
Help me fight through the nothingness of life

I don't wanna go through the motions
I don't wanna go one more day
without Your all consuming passion inside of me
I don't wanna spend my whole life asking,
"What if I had given everything,
instead of going through the motions?"

No regrets, not this time
I'm gonna let my heart defeat my mind

Pastor Jeff St. Clair

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Romans 12:1-12

Let Your love make me whole
I think I'm finally feeling something
'Cause just okay is not enough
Help me fight through the nothingness of this life

'Cause I don't wanna go through the motions
I don't wanna go one more day
without Your all consuming passion inside of me
I don't wanna spend my whole life asking,
"What if I had given everything,
instead of going through the motions?"

Paul was warning Christians here in the book of Romans! Don't do it because the world is doing it. As Christians, Paul is saying, not to conform to the ways of this world!

What is the world saying? The world is telling us to find the easy way to get something done. The world tells us to sit back and take it easy and everything will just fall into place!

Well, my friends, that doesn't work on a personal level nor does it work on a church level either! For too many years, the church has taken the stance, "We will open the doors on Sunday morning, give them the same stuff they have had for centuries and it will just continue and continue and continue." Guess what? It's not happening anymore!

The church and we even ourselves have become complacent! I DON'T WANT TO BE STATUS QUO! I want to be radical! I want to live an upside down life for Jesus! I want people to see that I love Jesus and that I am filled with the "*JOY, JOY, JOY, JOY, Down in my heart!*" (SING)

I am leading the Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace Course on Wednesday Nights. Dave keeps saying, "I want to live like no one else, so that some day, I can live like no one else!"

Friends, spiritually, I want to live like no one else so that someday, in eternity, I can live like God desired for me to live! Church, We want to live like no other, so that some day we can live like God desired us to live!

Romans Chapter 12 is a link to our Core Values of Baldwin Community Church. Our core values are Know, Grow, and Go. And the way to do this is by what Paul is teaching us in this chapter!

I really like verse 9 of Chapter 12. "Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil, hold on for dear life to be good."

We tend to think of this in the context of our own selves. But imagine with me for one second... as we take verse nine in the context of the church...

“Church, love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it. Run, church, RUN, for dear life from evil, hold on for dear life to be good.”

Do you see the difference? We don’t have the ability individually to change all the community alone. But just think if the body of Christ, takes this verse and loves from the center of who we are and not just go through the motions or fake it! The natural result will be to grow!!! Can you tell I am excited?

I had a person come into my office from our community who was in need. I knelt down with her in my office and prayed. I gave her a Bible and told her this would be a good start.

She said, “I am so glad I came up here. Someone told me you are the church that cares.” I gave her a big hug.

Do you know how proud (Ok, I shouldn’t be proud), do you know how blessed I am to say, “Yes, we are the church who cares. The church who is not afraid to share the love of Jesus to a hopeless world. The church who desires to see the people of this world receive the hope and joy that comes from a relationship with Jesus!”

But it breaks my heart when the church (other churches or at times people in our church who do not show the love of Christ) fails to let love flow from the center of who we are.

It is then when we and others do not experience the redeeming love of our Savior. It is then when we fail to live up to our core values of Knowing Jesus, Growing in Jesus, and then Going in the name of Jesus.

We have to get out of going through the motions church! It’s time we GROW! Let’s begin another revival in Baldwin-Whitehall! Let’s let the world know that it’s time to experience the year of the Lord’s favor! Amen? Amen!