

Your spiritual fitness plan for 2015

December 28, 2014

Call to Worship

Psalm 99:1-3 – The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble. He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! The Lord is great in Zion, and He is exalted above all the peoples. Let them praise Thy great and awesome name; Holy is He.

Sing Psalm 99A

- The psalm shows us God's might
- His strength loves justice
- The psalmist recounts evidence of God's greatness (cloudy pillar, etc)
- God forgave the people for their iniquity but chastened them
- Bow down, give God your worship

Opening Prayer – praising God, confessing our sins, requesting the Holy Spirit's help in our worship

Sing Psalm 119M

- I love thy law, it is my study (meditation) all the day
- Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies
- I know more than the aged because I have observed thy precepts
- I have restrained my feet from evil ways
- Thy words are sweeter than honey
- Therefore I hate false ways

Prayer for Blessing and Thanksgiving –

- Thanks and prayer for our pastor
- Thanks for the blessings of 2014
- Prayer for blessings in 2015
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Scripture Texts

Various – sprinkled throughout the sermon...

In 4 more days, we will start a new year!

This is the time of year when people make new year's resolutions.

- People often look at the turning of a new year as an opportunity to take on better habits/disciplines
- TV will be full of ads for losing weight, eating better, being more healthy, joining a gym, etc.
- General rule of thumb: you need a plan! (eat less, eat the right things, don't cheat, set aside time...)
- People often need a coach or mentor to guide you (points out areas to improve, encourages, corrects, compliments and criticizes, often leads by example)
- People need support and encouragement from loved ones

What better time than the beginning of the new year to consider your relationship with our Lord and our commitment to serve Him well??

- Today's sermon is mostly for people (men/women, adults, children) who are already Christians but it will hopefully be useful to those who are still unsure of their faith...

What is spiritual fitness and why do we need it?

- It is the strength of our faith, our understanding of our faith, our relationship with our Lord and the resulting relationship with the world and people around us (repeat)
- It is represented in our ability to resist sinful temptations, our disciplined lives of devotion to God and our desire to respond in thanks to our Lord for His gift of salvation through His Son.

Reminder of our obligations to our Lord

Romans 12:2 - And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

2 Timothy 3:16 - All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Colossians 3:23 - And whatsoever ye do, do [it] heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

Romans 12:1-2 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service.

Where do you need to improve?

- Write it down!
- First, let's start with the positive: What did you do well this year?
- List your weaknesses/idols/sins/doubts/fears/opportunities or desires for improvement
- Being honest with yourself will help you strengthen yourself and ask God and others for help
- Consider finding a trusted fellow Christian to share

What are your goals?

- Write it down
- These can be simple or complicated depending on where you are in your walk
- Reading your Bible every day, praying every day, being at church every week, being at Sunday school
- Not swearing, being more kind, being less angry, being more thankful
- Memorizing more verses, reading more commentaries
- The list could go on forever...

Work on your spiritual muscles!

- Prayer (praising God in prayer, confessing your sins in prayers, asking for forgiveness, asking for things you need, seeking God's answers) –
Mark 1:35 – And in the early morning while it was still dark, Jesus arose and went out and departed to a lonely place and was praying there.
The Lord's Prayer is a great model to follow
- Worship (Sunday services especially, but also worship at home and with friends and family, we are blessed by blessing Him)
Psalms 150 – praise the Lord, praise God in His sanctuary
- Personal devotions (reading God's word, reading books that help you understand,
Eph 6:10-17 ...Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on *the full armour of God* so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the spirit)
Psalms 119:105 - Thy word [is] a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
- Fellowship with Christians (praying together, studying together, supporting each other)
Hebrews 10:24,25 - and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
- Listen to your leaders
Hebrews 13:17 - Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.
- Listen to the Holy Spirit (God will never call you into sin to get what He desires for you...)

Use your spiritual muscles!

- Obey the Lord / Resist sin
Jas 4:7 - Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
1 Cor 10:12-13 - So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can *stand up* under it.

Col 3:8-10 - But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. *Do not lie* to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Bless God by blessing others

1 Peter 3:15 - But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

- Service in the church (be a Good Samaritan, do unto others..., love your neighbor as yourself)
- Ministries of mercy

James 1:27 - Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep himself unspotted from the world.
- Ministries of evangelism/teaching

Matthew 5:16 - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
- Ministries of justice for the weak

A few scenarios to consider

- If you're a parent, parent well; set a good example, teach your children about their Lord, care enough to say no when you think they are in danger, discipline with love and a desire to see your children saved
- If you're a father/head of household, lead well; be a model to your wife and family for how one should be in the word, love your wife as Christ loved the church, lead in family worship, insist that your children are in church, protect your family from evil
- If you're a child, learn well; respect and obey your parents who love you, love them back, follow their examples, resist the pressures of the world, invest yourself in your Christianity
- If you're a single and look forward to being married someday, wait well; seek out God's plan for you, be willing to wait for Him to introduce you to a compatible Christian, consider Jesus' standards for loving others
- If you're a single and think that you won't marry, invest time well; Paul was a great example of what can be possible for someone
- If you're an empty nester, mentor well; you've been through much of what others will go through (this holds true for those long-married as well as those divorced or those who have made mistakes)
- If you're a living, breathing person, love well; consider the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:1-12
- If you're a member of this church (and even if you aren't), serve well, pray well!!

If you don't believe that Jesus is your Lord and Savior, TODAY IS THE DAY. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you – and He will without fail!

BUT, WE CAN'T FORGET GOD'S GRACE!!

- Even with the best of intentions and the discipline of a spiritual Olympian, it's not enough

1 Corinthians 6:14 - And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

- We can't earn our way to heaven

Ephesians 2:8 - For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God:

- We can't accomplish these things without the Lord's help; Jesus is what makes our salvation possible, not our efforts at being a good Christian
- We must strive and pray for balance between desire for self-powered betterment and humble reliance on our Lord for blessing; either side of the spectrum is dangerous
- Contentment in life comes from knowing that we are God's children and he loves us very much
Hebrews 13:5 - [Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
- If you believe that Jesus is your Savior (that he was truly God & man and truly lived a perfect life and was killed and yet rose from the dead) and if you have placed your faith in him and have sought forgiveness for your sins and weaknesses, then when God looks at you, He sees a superstar!

Galatians 2:20 - I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Never forget, you are covered by Christ's perfect fitness! So press on and be disciplined in 2015 in thanksgiving to Him.

Closing Prayer

Psalm 90B

- Psalm asks God to help us count our days (appreciate our lives)
- Acknowledges that God has allowed trouble in our life and asks him to now send gladness and joy
- Asks God for blessing and "good favor" by blessing the labor of our hands

Tithes and offerings

Prayer of Offering and Thanksgiving

Psalm 138B

- Shows that we are to bring our thanks and praise to God
- You answered me when I called on you
- The Lord keeps his eye on the lowly ones; but not the proud and haughty
- Our path may be through trouble but God will preserve our life
- God will work out his plan for our lives

- God's love endures forever

Doxology

Jude 1:24,25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and ^[a]forever. Amen.