

Getting Closer to Jesus

We are in our second week of the new year and we are talking about tools to help you grow in your faith. Today we are talking about getting closer to Jesus.

Introduction

Last week we shared about continuing to grow in a new year and it starts with spending more time reading the Bible, meditating on what we read, and spending more time in prayer. These are the things that are going to bring us closer to the Lord. This week we are expanding on that to talk about getting closer to Jesus and how we do that.

Importance of Being Close to Jesus

Many ask why they should desire to get closer to Jesus. Some even ask what it means to be close to Jesus at all. As a follower of Jesus, it is very important that we draw closer to Jesus every day. It is his mission that we are all on. Jesus is the answer to all that ails the world and his message is one of peace and brotherhood amongst all people.

Joy

A few weeks ago in the lead up to Christmas, we read the Christmas story out of the gospel of Luke. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem an angel appeared to shepherds who were tending their sheep in the nearby fields. Let's read Luke 2:9-11.

Luke 2:9-11

(9) An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. (10) But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. (11) Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

The angel's proclamation said he brought good news that will cause great joy for all the people. One of the important aspects of getting closer to Jesus is to receive this joy that can only come from and through him.

Strength

Facing everything that comes at us in life today is not always easy. It takes a lot of strength to face the uncertainties we have in life. It is definitely something we cannot do on our own. It is also nearly impossible to carry out the mission God has given you under your own power and strength. We must rely on the strength we receive from getting closer to Jesus. Let's read Philippians 4:13.

Philippians 4:13

(13) I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

This is not strength to do what we want to do, but strength to face life and do what the Lord has asked us to do. This is strength that has no limit and is a great result of getting closer to Jesus.



Hope

Another important aspect of getting closer to Jesus is receiving hope. Life in this world is not easy and we face many trials and tribulations. It is easy to lose hope. It is easy to get depressed and despondent when we take our focus off Jesus and place it on the woes of this world. The strife in our communities and nations is worse than most of us alive today have ever seen. All of the violence can easily rob us of our hope.

When we get closer to Jesus our hope is recharged. When we keep our focus on Jesus and what is important for his mission and purpose our hope is restored. Let's read Psalm 62:5-6.

Psalms 62:5-6

(5) Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. (6) Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

We can find rest and hope as we get closer to Jesus.

These are just a few of the reasons to get closer to the Lord, there are many more. Now that we understand that there are many reasons to get closer to Jesus we need to look at how we do that.

How We Get Closer to Jesus

We get closer to Jesus by setting some daily habits. This is not a complete list, but it is a start of habits you can adopt that will get you closer to the Lord.

Bible Reading and Prayer

Last week we shared the two most important ways and they are reading the Bible and praying. We don't want to rehash what we shared last week. You can go back to that video or notes. What we will say about Bible reading and prayer is that it should be a daily habit, even if it is just for a few minutes. There are many free Bible reading plans to help you. If you have not read the Bible yourself, start with the gospel of John in the New Testament and then go from there.

Prayer is just a conversation with Jesus. There is nothing better to bring someone closer to another than talking to them. That is all prayer is and is the chief habit of getting closer to the Lord. Spend a few minutes in prayer each day sharing your thoughts, thanks, aspirations, desires, and questions with God. The more you do, the easier it gets.

Be Thankful and Humble

Two of the best attributes we can adopt from Jesus is thankfulness and humility.

Jesus thanked God often. We read before he fed the 5000 with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish in the 6th chapter of John's gospel that he gave thanks before he broke the bread and passed it and the fish around for everyone. The other most notable passage that Jesus gives thanks is during the last supper when he was celebrating the Passover with the disciples. We read in 1 Corinthians 11 that on that night which Jesus was betrayed he took up the bread and the wine and he gave thanks for them before breaking the bread and drinking the wine with his friends and disciples.



When we are thankful, our focus comes off of us and our situation and puts it on Jesus and all the good we have going for us. This falls right in line with being humble. Look at what the Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 2:5-8.

Philippians 2:5-8

(5) In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: (6) Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; (7) rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

There has never been anyone more humble to walk this earth than Jesus. Jesus, the very Son of God, gave up his place in Heaven to be born as a person, living the life of a person including all its frailties and difficulties and gave up that life on a Roman cross. All that just so you and I could be restored to a full relationship with God.

To get closer to Jesus practice thankfulness and humility.

Serve Others

A cornerstone of Cell Life Church is serving others. We encourage everyone to serve in their community in some way and give the glory and thanks to Jesus. This is so integral to the mission of Cell Life Church that we ask each cell site to serve together in their community and share with us the stories of their ministry. We base this doctrine on Matthew 25:34-40. We won't read that today but encourage you to.

Serving others in the name of Jesus allows us to shift our focus away from ourselves. This helps us stay humble and be thankful which leads us to less complaining and draws us ever closer to the Lord.

To get closer to Jesus read your Bible and pray daily, maintain an attitude of thankfulness and humility, and serve others before yourself.

Results of Getting Closer to Jesus

The result of all this is a deeper relationship with the Lord and a clearer picture of our world. We have hope and joy that cannot be explained other than being close to Jesus. Our outlook on life gets more positive each day and we can influence others helping them get closer to Jesus and live better more productive joy-filled lives.

This makes us better citizens of this world and will usher in the return of Jesus sooner.

Friends, get closer to Jesus. It is the single best way to live this life on earth and prepare ourselves for eternity in Heaven as a child of God and co-heir with Jesus.

