

KANSAS COMMUNITIES MINISTRY UPDATE

"My objective is to know Christ in my own life in ever-increasing depth and to make disciples and develop laborers at all times, under any conditions, in every place I go."

Matthew 6:19-21

"Do not accumulate for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and devouring insect destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But accumulate for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and devouring insect do not destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (NET Bible—used by permission)

Growth in Christlikeness

How much of our transformation into Christlikeness is up to us and how much is up to God? Different traditions and theological perspectives answer this question differently. Paul in Romans 12:1-2 commands us to "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice," "do not be conformed to this world" but to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." Sounds like it's up to us in these verses.

John tells us that "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4b) Paul reminds us that "it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

So which is it? Am I responsible for my growth or is God? The answer is "yes!" I am 100% responsible for my part and God is 100% responsible for His part!

The Last Enemy by Richard Spann

We have many enemies in our Christian walk. They are dedicated, relentless, and purpose our destruction physically and spiritually. They became our enemies when, as a race, we rebelled against God through Adam and Eve. The Good News of the Gospel is that Christ, our Victor, has dealt with our enemies! Sins, which



condemn us, have been dealt with and removed by His Cross! (1 John 3:5, Colossians 2:13-14) Self, that persistent rebel that leads us astray, has been buried with Him. (Romans 6:3-4) The world itself is dealt with by the cross as well, as the Apostle Paul celebrates in Galatians 6:14. "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." In addition, 1 John 3:8 tells us that the Son of God appeared in order to destroy the work of the devil. All enemies that we face in life are now conquered but one, which is what the scriptures call the last enemy. 1 Corinthians 15:26 tells us what this enemy is. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

Death looms before us as a specter which draws closer with each passing day. Unpredictable as to its cause and timing, it is declared to be an enemy. It separates us from our work, our plans, our friendships, and our loved ones. It thrusts us from the known into the unknown. It is the separation of the body from the spirit. Its nearness produces grief in those who approach its gates and those who mourn with them. Job describes death in these terms. "The land of darkness, and of the shadow of death; a land of thick darkness, as darkness itself; a land of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness." The shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept," reminds us that even our Designer and Creator wept in the presence of death. Our tears, our loss, and our grief as our loved ones pass is felt in His heart as well as in ours. Being fully human as well as Divine, He understands and joins with us in our grieving, but He also wants us to know the scriptural truth about death. (cont. on p. 3)



Goads and Nails

Excerpt from Goads and Nails
Vol. 1, pp 115-118

"Harvest is Plentiful, Workers are Few"

One of my favorite memories of Lorne Sanny is a story he told regarding an Admiral in the U.S. Navy. After rising through the ranks of Ensign, Captain and Commodore, he served for many years as an Admiral in the Navy. Over the years, the other personnel noticed a strange habit of his... each morning he would take a key out of his pocket and unlock a small drawer in his desk... He retired and the drawer was opened. The note read "Remember, starboard is right, port is left."

Remember these six words as well: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." Do we believe this?

Dawson Trotman in 1933 met with others on a beach in California at 5 AM daily. They looked at a map and asked the Lord to send out workers into His harvest field. There are now active workers in more than 100 nations. Are we asking for workers in our neighborhoods, churches and cities? Let's be diligent in being faithful to the Lord.-Richard Spann

Be transformed by David Dennis

This familiar passage in Romans 12:2 has always been challenging to me. Paul tells us "Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect." (NET Bible, used by permission). I've asked many times what it means to "renew my mind" and thus be transformed.

Here are some ideas ...

1. **Transformation requires that I avoid conformity to the world.** How easy it is to conform myself to the world! As a gas expands to conform itself to the shape of a container, I too often take on the shape of my environment. When someone jokes in a very unhelpful manner, making fun of someone, or makes a disparaging remark, it is easy to smile and "go along to get along." But the power of Christ in me (Gal. 2:20, Phil. 3:10) is available to fight against that conformity. Christ is better than that and when He lives His life through me, I am better than that. I'm a child of the King and carry His name now!
2. **Transformation of my mind occurs as I focus my mind on that which is true,** worthy of respect, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent or praiseworthy. (Phil. 4:8). What is "true"? What is "worthy of respect"? What is just, pure, lovely, etc? God's Word is truth (John 17:17). Jesus Himself is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). I start, continue and end in the person and Word of Jesus Christ as I focus on His Word. I must turn from that which is not profitable toward His Word.
3. **Transformation occurs as I look at Jesus.** 2 Cor 3:18 NKJV "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." I have a friend who reminds me that "we become whom we admire." I had a teacher in high school that I really admired. I began to talk like him and to mimic his mannerisms. If my mind is on the latest fad (or fear) or if I focus on how bad things are in the world, I risk being pulled down into that cesspool. If I focus on popular commentators (on either side of the aisle), I risk mimicking their viewpoints and, worse, their attitudes of cynicism. Rather, if I look to Christ, I start to model my life after Him. I not only see Him, I start to see Him more and more in me (admittedly I have a very long way to go here!).

As I mentioned in the first page sidebar, it seems that our transformation is 100% up to God to do His part. It is also, however, 100% up to us to do our part. That has nothing to do with obtaining the wonderful gift of eternal life which is a free gift, accepted when we believe in Jesus alone for that life (John 3:16; John 6:47). But the growth in Christlikeness that he expects of each of His children (theologians call this "sanctification") is a joint effort. My job? Keep my eyes off the world and on Jesus and His word!

The Last Enemy by Richard Spann (continued from page one)

The Lord desires us to understand first of all that the approach to death, including the particular illness, event or situation that produces death will not be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39) All the days ordained for us were written in His book before one of them came to be. (Psalms 139:16b) This is the assurance that the days of illness, confinement and travail as we near the end of our lives are administered with His perfect control, His unfathomable knowledge and infinite love. We are His inheritance, His handiwork and His home. ... John 14:2-3 reminds us that He is preparing a place for us. He is also preparing us for that place. When we are ready and our place is ready, He will take us to be with Him! It will not be like a sign I saw in a restaurant earlier this week. "We regret to inform you that your assigned seating is not available. Please wait in your vehicle until you are called."

The Lord wants us to realize that the exact details of our coming to Him are under His control. He states in Revelation 1:18 that He is the one who holds the keys of death. For some, the Lord will give them a "heads up," so to speak. He informed my mother that she was going to go home to be with Him in four more days, which came to pass as He said it would. My last visit in the nursing home to see my stepbrother was characterized by a smile on his face saying, "I am going home in three days!" The Lord took him home three days later. ... Perhaps the most remarkable event describing the Lord's control of His timing was a patient I was called to see in the Intensive Care Unit years ago. ... I visited her late in the evening, and to my surprise, she sat up in bed and started a conversation! My immediate thought was that there was only one reason that she regained consciousness and that it was because she needed to hear the Gospel. She listened carefully, prayed to receive Christ and I visited a little longer with her before prescribing treatment for the wheezing. When I returned to her room the next morning on rounds, I was informed that she had passed away during the early morning hours. Truly, our Lord holds the keys of death!

We have seen how the cross of Christ has dealt with all of our enemies except one, our last enemy, which is death. This enemy our Lord has dealt with by His resurrection. II Timothy 1:10 states that He has "abolished death." (KJV) What does it mean to "abolish?" Websters dictionary states that it means "to do away with wholly," or "to annul." To understand what this means more completely we need to look at what death is. Death is separation. Physical death is separation of the spirit from the body. Spiritual death is separation of the spirit from God. To "annul" or "to do away with wholly," then, implies that separation is nonexistent. Death, having been made of no effect, then, has become the portal by which we are united with Christ. The moment we accepted Him as Savior, he was imputed to us as righteousness. ... I John 3:2 says that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (KJV) To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. (II Corinthians 5:8) My mother's last words on earth and her first ones in heaven as she entered the presence of the Lord were "Oh Glorious!" I have known others who have entered the Lord's presence in Heaven even while their body was still partially functioning! I was called to the hospital to see a patient of mine who was admitted with a tentative diagnosis of a massive stroke. ... Her blood pressure and pulse were normal but there was absolutely no response or movement. As I stood at the end of her bed all of a sudden both arms shot up in the air and she said "Jesus!" I immediately knew two things. Number one was that she was not talking to me! Number two was that I was going to have a difficult time bringing her back! Her body "lived" another day before respiratory and cardiac functions ceased.

There is also another aspect of death which is "made not to be," and that is the separation that death produces among believers. In the view of some, there is no time lapse before this reunion occurs! Ray Stedman related the following thoughts in *Authentic Christianity*. "We are all locked into time. At our physical 'death,' we leave time and enter the eternal NOW. But what is even more amazing is that in the experience of that believer he does not leave anyone behind. All his loved ones who know Christ are there too, including his Christian descendants who were unborn when he died! Since there is no past or future in heaven, this must be the case. Even those who, in time, stand beside his grave and weep and then go home to an empty house, are, in his experience, with him in glory." Discovery House Publishers, 1996, pages 147-148. The above comments are beyond my comprehension, but they do introduce the certainty that in eternity in God's timing, there will no longer be any separation experience among believers. Christ will have fully and finally dealt with our last enemy. We will be like Him, with Him, and with others who have placed their trust in Him. We will join a mighty throng, bringing glory to Him forever and ever. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21) (KJV)

Spotlight on Online Resources

◆*Kansas Navigators Media:*

Sam McVay was our speaker for the Men's Retreat in April 2018. He gave three great messages on "God-centered Prayer." Hear his enthusiastic talks here: <https://kansasnavs.org/media/spring-2018-god-centered-prayer/> (You can also download these to listen to on other devices.)



◆*Kansas Navigators blogs:*

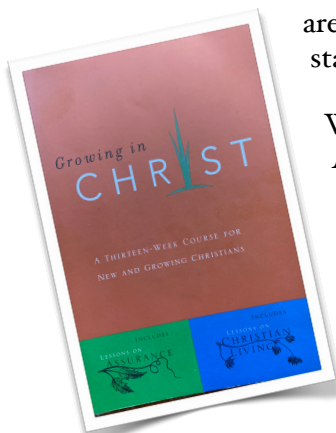
Does God seem to be hiding Himself from you? Remember that He promised the Israelites He would bless them, make His face to shine upon them and be gracious to them (Numbers 6:24-26). Read this encouraging blog from Richard Spann: <https://kansasnavs.org/when-god-hides-himself/>

◆*Podcast "Making Disciples Naturally"*

Our 12-15 minute podcasts are published weekly each Saturday morning. This month we'll hear from Al Ewart with TUMI as he shares his heart about being sold out to God. Here his inspiring story here: <https://kansasnavs.org/podcasts> or subscribe via Apple Podcasts, Overcast, Spotify, etc.

Back to the Basics ... by David Dennis

No matter how many new Bible studies there are, I keep coming back to this fantastic 13 - week study when I start to help someone grow in their Christian walk. *Growing in Christ* encompasses two other studies ("Lessons on Assurance" and "Lessons on Christian Living"). Whether they have been believers for decades or just starting their walk, I almost always start with this study. Why? Because people will tend to duplicate what we do with them as they start to invest in others. So if I started with something more "in depth" thinking that they are "beyond the basics," they might do the same with others. It's best to start at the beginning (a very good place to start!).



We memorize one key verse each week (Assurance of Salvation, Assurance of Answered Prayer, Assurance of Victory, Assurance of Forgiveness and Assurance of Guidance) along with a Bible study where we look up passages and fill in the blanks. Seems simple, but it is a great way to introduce someone to the basics of the Christian life.

The next 8 lessons cover such topics as Putting Christ First, God's Word, Love, Giving, etc. You can get a copy here: <https://www.navigators.org/resource/growing-in-christ/>