

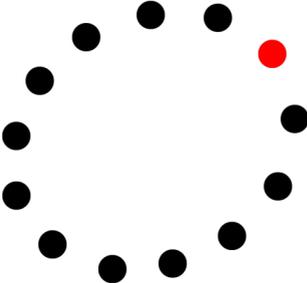
LifeSpring Sanctification Weeks 2017

Sunday 1st January

to

Friday 13th January

(and 1920's party on Saturday 14th Jan!)



Introduction to 2017 Weeks of Sanctification

Once again we are starting the year with a fortnight of 'sanctification'.

During these weeks we are asking that we all commit to a media fast and make a decision to 'fast' at least an aspect of media, especially if it is something that you wouldn't find easy to do! It is often only when we stop that we realise these things have a far greater hold than they should. It could be TV, Facebook, shopping on line, computer games, listening to music, going to the cinema, etc. Our suggestion—cut these out & draw near to God, & let's see what he will do.

You could fast other areas too if you want, but we have found tremendous benefit, especially when we all join together to cut out all unnecessary external influences.

It's not something to get legalistic over, but it does require we are disciplined. If the influence is Christian, feel free to watch & listen to Christian programmes & music & read Christian books, etc.

During this fortnight we will not be holding evening cells or other main meetings, & we will be gathering every night except Wednesday and Saturday evenings.

We have based the content on the phrase—'**loving God, loving people**'. This sums up what we are about. It's the great commandment—the first part of our vision.

The notes are to help us all focus together, but we do encourage everyone to come to as many of the corporate meetings as possible. There will be a time to worship together, to receive from God's word, to pray, and to respond to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Let's ask God to do a deep work as we start the New Year with Him.

His dream is that Reading is powerfully impacted by the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our dream too!

Let's work together to see souls saved, leaders developed, and cells multiplying across our town—for His glory.

Sunday 1st Jan – Loving God....

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matt 22:37-38)

Loving Father

‘I will do what the Father requires of me, so that the world will know that I love the Father’. (John 14:31)

We talk much about receiving the Father’s love & that is right & biblical, but today we want to meditate on what it means to love Father God.

Jesus has shown us what Father is like—a God of love, of grace & mercy, of faithfulness & truth. A God who is holy and chose to give everything for us to make it possible for us to have a relationship with Him.

Some view God as distant and austere, but Jesus has shown us He is not. He is a father who loves His children and wants the best for our lives. He desires communion with us. When sin came into the world, fellowship with God was broken, but out of his incredible love for us, He paid the highest price that relationship might be restored.

So although He is still all powerful and majestic in his holiness, even holding the universe in the palm of his hands, because we have been touched by his unconditional love, we love him. John reminds us ‘we love (Him?) because he first loved us.’

Lets bring our praise, our worship, our heartfelt love to Papa God for who He is & for what He has done. And yes, he loves to hear our praise but Jesus tells us it is when we do what the Father requires of us; that’s how people will know how much we love Him.

Its both! Doing what he requires—seeking first His Kingdom, His will for our lives, but bringing the fruit of our lips as an offering of love and worship too.

Monday 2nd Jan — Loving God....

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matt 22:37-38)

Loving Jesus

“If you love me, keep my commands”. (John 14:15)

During these 2 weeks of ‘sanctification’ we want to draw near, to worship, to hear His voice, & to love Him.

Father has chosen to exalt Jesus far above everything & everyone, & the Holy Spirit has also come to enable us to glorify Jesus. It is all about Him!

We love Jesus for who He is & for what He has done. If we received no further blessing from Him, we would still be indebted to Him forever—He gave us His life to save us from judgement and hell. But more than that, He also died to give us life, new life, abundant life, eternal life!

But love ultimately is not measured by words, but by action. Loving Jesus is about laying down our life, it is about being willing to follow, to obey, to make Him Lord and master of our lives.

‘If you love me, keep my commands!’ Its quite simple—in theory, not so easy in practice!

Loving Jesus means dealing with wrong attitudes, releasing forgiveness from the heart, loving our brother—& our enemy! Loving Jesus is about sharing the gospel and discipleship—because that is one of His commands. Its about giving, praying, fasting; its about humility, serving, and putting God first in our lives. These things show how much we really love when done from a right heart.

So today, lets quieten ourselves and ask Him—what areas of my life do we need to adjust so that they reflect our love and obedience to Him?

Tuesday 3rd Jan — Loving God...

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matt 22:37-38)

Loving Holy Spirit

“If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. (John 14:15-17)

Loving God is about loving Father, loving Jesus, and of course, loving the Holy Spirit too.

He is God, He is divine, He is a ‘He’ - a person, not an ‘it’. Jesus has gone back to heaven and sits at the right hand of Papa God, but the Holy Spirit has come to live among us, even in us, and through Him we experience the presence of Jesus and Father.

He has come as an advocate, or comforter, or counsellor. He has come to lead us into truth, to bring revelation and understanding. He has come to open the eyes of our heart, and to enable us to be witnesses for Him.

He has come to anoint, to empower, to bring a supernatural dimension to our faith. The more we know Him, the more we receive from Him, the more we will have to give away to others. His presence and filling that empowers the church to be the hope of the world.

I love the Holy Spirit.

We honour & love Him by allowing Him to be our pastor, our shepherd, our leader—and by following His lead.

So today, tell Him you love Him. Worship Him. He is God and lives in you. Love Him by following His lead, by opening up your life to His voice and direction. Love Him by welcoming Him into your life—and choosing to live to bring Him honour in all things.

Wednesday 4th Jan — Loving God....

Jesus replied, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matt 22:37-38)

We have no public meeting today, but mediate on what the Holy Spirit is saying to you & write down what challenges you have received and what actions you need to take.

Talk to your cell leader about it.

Thursday 5th Jan — Loving God....

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matt 22:37-38)

Loving His church

“Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?” “Who are you Lord?” Saul asked. And the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!” (Acts 9:4-5)

A strange verse you may feel to illustrate a point about loving the church. And you are right! But notice what Jesus says to Saul—“Why are you persecuting me?” He wasn't persecuting Jesus, he was persecuting people—Christians. But Jesus didn't see it that way. By persecuting the church, his body, Jesus was being persecuted.

So extending the principle, persecuting (as with Paul), or even speaking badly or negatively about the church, is doing that to Jesus! Loving God with everything we have requires a love for His people, the church, too.

It is hard to separate! What we do to the church we do to Jesus. When you gossip, or moan, or criticise, or speak negatively about the church, we are actually doing that to Jesus! When you react or rebel against spiritual leadership, we are actually rebelling against Jesus. So stop it! Rather, than be negative, let's speak well of, encourage, build up, and love the church—& in so doing, we are of course doing that to Jesus.

Loving the church is us loving God. In fact the apostle John tells us a test of our salvation is our love for our brothers and sisters. If we don't love the church, we have to ask, are we really saved?

Of course, the church is not perfect—and Jesus is! Yes, there will always be room for improvement, but Jesus sees us as perfect & through the Holy Spirit, the church is called to bring glory to Him by our words and actions.

So, love the church! I do! We're not where I want us to be, but there is no other organisation that even gets close—because it is filled with His presence and love.

Friday 6th Jan — Loving God....

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matt 22:37-38)

Loving His dream

¹⁰ This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head. (Eph 1:11)

Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. (Heb 12:2b)

Loving God is not just worshipping Him, nor just loving His people, it is also about catching His heart & loving His dream too. How do we catch someone’s heart and dream? Well it takes spending time together. For us, in relation to God it’s through our devotions, through our worship, through our church / cell engagement. They can all help us catch his heart and dream. It will take the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our heart, but when we have caught it, or to put it more accurately, been caught by it, part of our expression of loving God will mean loving his purposes and living for them.

Loving His dream means our dreams become secondary to His. Our love is expressed in how we live to fulfil His dream for us & the peoples of the world.

But what an amazing dream! For the joy—of seeing the dream fulfilled, he endured the pain and shame of crucifixion. In Jesus’ eyes it was a small price to pay to potentially set the world free from Satan’s hold of death and judgement and enable them to enjoy eternal life now and forever.

And He wants the whole world to know. His plan is to bring all things under one head—Jesus Christ. Everything, everyone will one day bow the knee, but he would so prefer it is a voluntary action of worship and love on our part.

Lets play our part by living to fulfil His dream, showing how much we love Him.

Saturday 7th Jan — Loving God....

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matt 22:37-38)

We have no public meeting today, but mediate on what the Holy Spirit is saying to you & write down what challenges you have received and what actions you need to take.

Talk to your cell leader about it.

Sunday 8th Jan —.... loving people

Jesus replied, "...This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (Matt 22:37-38)

- from our heart

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16)

We have been looking at the first commandment—to love God wholeheartedly. Jesus says the second is equally important—love your neighbour too.

So who is our neighbour? I believe it is all we come in contact with. It could be our literal next door neighbours, our colleagues at work, our family, those who live in our local community, those who come along to The Pavilion, those in our cells. These are our neighbours. And we are called to love them too.

The challenge today is loving people—from the heart. You see you may not like everyone, you may not get on with everyone, but love goes beyond that.

God set us an amazing example. Even when we were still 'enemies' he sent his Son Jesus to die for us—because he so loved the world.

Paul tells us 'the love of God has been poured into our hearts' and is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. In order to love people from the heart, we need to have received God's love in our hearts. Then through the power of the Holy Spirit we love others too.

Its more than emotion. Its more than duty. It's active love—forgiving, refusing to be offended, believing the best, being kind, willing to serve, patient, not proud, not keeping account of wrongs etc.

Let's ask God to fill us with his love so we can give it away—and love from the heart.

Monday 9th Jan —.... loving people

Jesus replied, “...This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Matt 22:37-38)

- with our words

*Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your **words** will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (Eph 4:29)*

We love with actions, we love with words too.

Words are so important. Negative and critical words are not good, they put people down, but words of encouragement, of hope, of faith; words that praise and build up help people to feel loved, encouraged, and accepted.

Let's love each other with good, positive, kind words to, and about each other. Don't gossip to others about people; in fact, refuse to listen to gossip—it has no place in LifeSpring Church. It only sows dissension and creates a bad atmosphere.

Someone was in tears the other day. They had heard really unkind words spoken about a cleaner at their workplace—not to her, but to others. She wondered—are these people my friends? What do they say about me when I'm not around? And all of a sudden she felt very insecure in her work environment. That's how harmful gossip can be.

But rather let's sing each other's praises and tell each other how good that person is and what a blessing they are. A culture of honour is built on good speech (followed by good deeds too), so good words are really important.

Loving people with our words helps create an environment for acceptance and growth. Of course, we all make mistakes and we all need words of correction and instruction from time to time which is why it is important we have love in our hearts. Then it is not just putting people down but it is with a view to helping each grow to become all that God has called us to be.

Lets watch our tongue—and use it to build each other up with positive words rather than knock each other down. Both are contagious!

Tuesday 10th Jan —... loving people

Jesus replied, "...This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (Matt 22:37-38)

- becoming community

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)

The challenge of community—especially living in an independent and individualist culture! But community expresses the heart of God. Even He is 3 persons in 1.

Here in Acts we see the fruit of the Holy Spirit being outpoured on the church in Jerusalem. Love for God and love for each other was shed abroad in their hearts. They cared, they met needs, they ate together, they worshipped together, they opened up their homes to each other—and people got saved every day!

God was in their midst. He loves community. He loves family. He loves it when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity.

As I said, it is a challenge in our culture, but my prayer is that everyone who comes to LifeSpring feels included and accepted. Sundays is a larger expression of our life together; cells are a smaller expression of our life together. Both are important, but community transcends meetings—it is about sharing life. Its about spending time together, laughing and crying. Its about being for each other in need and in plenty. A community of the Holy Spirit is full of righteousness, peace and joy—because He lives among them.

Wouldn't it be amazing if community was created in such a tangible way here at LifeSpring that every day people were being saved and added to our number?

Wednesday 11th Jan —.... loving people

Jesus replied, "...This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (Matt 22:37-38)

We have no public meeting today, but meditate on what the Holy Spirit is saying to you & write down what challenges you have received and what actions you need to take.

Talk to your cell leader about it.

Thursday 12th Jan —.... loving people

Jesus replied, “...This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Matt 22:37-38)

- priestly families

Family is so important to God. Even the picture of God being our Father expresses his heart for family. But it is not just family that God desires, but priestly families who together live by his principles with the call of God on their lives.

Pastors Cesar & Claudia have taught us through word and example so much about the importance of priestly families. For some of us it is just a dream because it all seems so far away, but I want to encourage everyone of us to begin to believe the impossible is possible!

If the ideal family is led by a mother and father (which it is!), still many of us have a different experience for all sorts of reasons. Some of us don't have 2 parents, or even none that we live with. Others may not be married or are married to a spouse who does not love the Lord. Or maybe our children have wandered away from the Lord, or difficulties have come within family relationships. Some of us are doing our best as a single parent—but life is hard.

I want to encourage you, whoever you are, to seek God and believe for change. In recent years we have seen spouses recommit to God, we have seen children come back to the Lord, we have seen reconciliation between family members—nothing is too hard for God. But we do have an enemy who wants to destroy marriage & family—the bedrock of society. God is calling us to stand firm, to work hard, to model family life by putting God first in our marriages and in our parenting—that we may produce Godly offspring for the glory of God.

Ask God to give you a dream for priestly family, then believe, and take steps in faith to see that dream fulfilled.

Family is a blessing from God—don't let the enemy steal it.

Friday 13th Jan —... loving people

Jesus replied, "...This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (Matt 22:37-38)

- loving Reading

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matt 9:36)

Most of us were born elsewhere, some even in different nations, but God has brought us to Reading.

Reading has changed beyond recognition over the years and is now one of the most prosperous towns in our nation. And yet, alongside the prosperity there is also increasing poverty and homelessness.

The Pavilion shines as a beacon of hope in a needy part of Reading, and He has entrusted us to make a difference for Him here. It is the best building in the best location—for us!

Addictions still ruin so many lives. Girls turn to prostitution to pay for their habit; others are trafficked and held against their will in our part of Reading. It is bed-sit land—and that means there are many lonely people around who need befriending. It is even more difficult when some don't speak our language—but we are here!

We have a mosque either side of us and many from different religions work or live in this area. But just as God so loved the world he sent Jesus, so we are called to love Reading, to love the people of Reading, to be good news and to share good news—because the gospel has power to change lives.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion. We are surrounded by rich and poor but God wants us to have his love and compassion for the people of Reading. A love which stirs us to share the good news—there is healing in the name of Jesus, marriages can be mended in Jesus Name, sins can be forgiven and new life received—and Jesus has called us and is sending us to be that good news to Reading.

What a privilege, what an honour! Ask God to give you His love and compassion for the people of Reading.

