August 13, 2017

Series: Asking for Directions

Growth Track Step 2 - Finding Freedom - Connection - Relationships

Give a result of generosity …

6 a.m. Prayer Meetings this week - 9 a.m. on Saturday

Pray

**The Fuel**

John 15:1-17

**Intro:** We’ve been talking about getting direction from God.

Sometimes people struggle with getting direction - but the ultimate direction for the most important things are clear in God’s Word.

We often want direction for things of lesser importance. We struggle because we want direction for the things that we want - when God has laid out clearly in His Word how to arrive at the destinations He wants for our lives. We just don’t prioritize the things He wants - we prioritize the things we want.

“God, how can I get this … How can I get to this place.”

Not getting an answer? Maybe you should look in the Word to see the place He really wants you to go - the target He really wants you to shoot at!

1st message - We have been given clear directions to our ultimate destination.

2nd message - Jesus gives us a guide who shows us the steps we need to take - The Holy Spirit is the Guide.

Now, let’s talk about the fuel we need to get to God’s destination for our lives. We’re not going to get anywhere without fuel. There are gas stations all across the country - more and more there are battery charging stations and there will be more of those …

What kind of fuel am I talking about today? The kind of fuel that God gives us to help us reach the destination He has for us.

INCENTIVE!

**Incentive is the fuel God gives us to follow His great plan.**

I’m sure in your life you have experienced positive incentives and negatives incentives -

* As a child - you do what you’re told, you may get some extra ice cream after dinner - if you don’t do what you’re told, you may have a stinging sensation on your hinder parts when you sit down after dinner.
* As a teen - you follow direction to where we want you to go, you may get the car for an extra night this week - and some spending money for your night out with friends - if you don’t follow direction to where we want you to go - you may not see the car or your friends for another month!
* As a student - you follow instructions, you may get a great grade, opening up scholarship opportunities. If you don’t follow instructions, don’t study, you may be taking all of these classes over again.
* In the work force - Do you want to reach the goal? Do you want to advance? Do you want a pay raise? These can be positive incentives - Do you want no pay increase? Docked time & wages? Potentially losing your job? These are negative incentives.

In today’s passage of Scripture, we are given some FUEL in the form both positive and negative incentives.

What is this fuel for? What does God want us to do?

**God wants us to reproduce!**

Family life is a picture of this. Go forth - multiply - replenish the earth.

In the family of God, we are to be bringing new members into the family! This is one of God’s highest priorities!

Jesus died for us and others - once we have received, are we reproducing others?

Know God - Find Freedom - Discover Purpose - Make a Difference -

This is what we are praying 21 days for - Prepare for fall - great time to ask people to come -

***Use Random Acts of Kindness Cards …***

**If we’re going to reproduce we must understand relationships.**

John 15:1-2 - “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.”

Jesus is using an agricultural illustration.

Jesus is the Vine and you are not going to get any grapes - any new fruit - any production or reproduction - no growth - no new life coming into the family of God - unless you have a vine -

And you will be fruitless - you will have no part in bringing anyone into the family unless you are connected to the Vine.

God is the gardener - He’s the overseer of all. He’s poured His life into the world through Jesus - we must be connected to Him for His life to flow through us!

Most of you know that if you have a rosebush in your yard it’s going to have to be cut back so it can be more fruitful. He will cut on us - He will work on us - He allows pain sometimes in our lives - with the ultimate goal that we become stronger - more life-giving - more fruitful!

John 15:3-4 - You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you…

So, even when we are pruned - even when He is working on us - realize He is doing it to make us stronger, more life-giving - don’t you want to be a life-giving person?

Being life-giving is much more joyful than being life-sucking!

If this is going to happen, we have to remain in Jesus no matter what happens - no matter what pain comes! We can’t be fruitful and life-giving in our lives unless we remain in Him!

Now, let’s talk about this fuel - let’s talk about the incentives - both positive and negative - that Jesus gives us to stay focused on His goal of giving life to others, even through the pain - even through difficulty.

**> Negative Incentive - No life.**

John 15:4-5 - Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

If we have no relationship with Jesus, we have no life in us. Thus, we can’t give any life to anyone else.

There are two kinds of fruit Jesus wants us to produce -

New Life - more people coming into the family of God - if you are in the family of God - God’s direction and priority for your life is to bring others in. Give life to others. What is your purpose? How are you making a difference?

John 4:35-36 - You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe

for harvest. The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike!

**There are people in your life that you can bring to Jesus right now.**

Another kind of fruit - a better life for us -

Galatians 5:22-23 - But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Those are the characteristics of a great life! That is the kind of life He wants you to have!

In order for this to happen, you’ve got to be in a relationship with Jesus!

**> Positive Incentive - Lots of life!**

John 15:5 - Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit.

You stay in relationship with Jesus and you will be doing what He wants you to do! You will be making a difference and bringing others into the Family of God! This is our highest purpose - and here’s some fuel - here’s some incentive - there can be a lot of this! Lots of life! Lots of people coming in!

Big family! Lots of joy! Sharon’s family … Eckart family …

**> Negative Incentive - Lost life.**

John 15:6 - Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.

Ouch. Not good. Negative incentive. Bad fuel - water in the gas - this is not what we want.

Without a relationship with Jesus - we’re not going anywhere. We won’t accomplish anything. We won’t fulfill His purpose for our lives. We won’t grow. We won’t have any life to give. We ourselves will lose our lives. We will lose the life He has planned for us.

For some, this is the fuel they need to stay connected to Jesus!

Sometimes we are more concerned with other relationships than we are with our relationship to Jesus. We are more concerned with what others think of us than with how Jesus thinks of us.

Matthew 10:28 - Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Don’t worry about other relationships more than your relationship with Jesus. Put that relationship first - then all the others will fall into place - and if they aren’t in His plan for you, you have to let them go.

Others will come - because being in a relationship with Jesus means you will have life and be giving life to others! That means you will be in great relationships!

People suffer because they want to please others, when Jesus has so much more for us!

**> Positive Incentive - Answered Prayer.**

John 15:7 - But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!

This is when we ask according to His will and purpose! When you are in relationship with Him, you are going to know what that is!

Too often we ask for things that aren’t good for us - aren’t in His plan for us.

But, when we have His purposes in mind - we want to bring others into the family of God - we are going to pray along those lines and God is going to answer those prayers!

You want to see people you love come into a relationship with Jesus? Work on your relationship with Jesus … make it stronger than it has ever been … then make those people the focus of your prayers - how you can love them the focus of your prayers - how you can make a difference in the lives of many others the focus of your prayers.

Those are prayers God is going to answer!

**> Positive Incentive - God is Honored.**

John 15:8 - When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

Don’t you want God to be honored through your life?

Stay in relationship with Jesus - and have bringing others into a relationship with Him one of your highest priorities - and God is going to be honored in your life.

When He is honored in your life, then He will honor you!

When the boss is happy, it kind of spreads around - makes for a good day!

Keep the boss in a good mood! Go for His goals!

**> Positive Incentive - Love.**

John 15:9-10 - I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love.

Here’s some fuel we need - Love.

*What the world needs now is love, sweet love - it’s the only thing that there’s just too little of.*

Do you know that you are loved? The God of the universe loves you! He loves you so much He sent His Son to come and die to be in a relationship with you! He rose from the dead and sends His Spirit to make this relationship possible!

This is what we should experience to such a great extent that, like Him, we won’t be satisfied unless more come into this relationship.

Don’t let Father God love you and you not experience it! He loves you! Enter into this relationship - through Jesus Christ!

Love is maybe the most powerful incentive - fuel - here is one more -

**> Positive Incentive - Joy.**

John 15:11 - I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

Woo Hoo! Party time! Ultimate joy comes when we know what He wants us to do and we do it!

Growth Track!!!

Max Lucado told this story in *The Applause of Heaven*: Robert Reed said, “I have everything I need for joy!”

His hands are twisted and his feet are useless. He can’t bathe himself. He can’t feed himself. He can’t brush his teeth, comb his hair, or put on his underwear. His shirts are held together by strips of Velcro. His speech drags like a worn out audio cassette.

Robert has cerebral palsy. The disease keeps him from driving a car, riding a bike, and going for a walk. But it didn’t keep him from graduating from high School or attending Abilene Christian University, from which he graduated with a degree in Latin. Having cerebral palsy didn’t keep him from teaching at a St. Louis junior college or from venturing overseas on five mission trips.

And Robert’s disease didn’t prevent him from becoming a missionary in Portugal. He moved to Lisbon, alone, in 1972. There he rented a hotel room and began studying Portuguese. He found a restaurant owner who would feed him after the rush hour and a tutor who would instruct him in the language.

Then he stationed himself daily in the park, where he distributed brochures about Christ. Within six years he led seventy people to the Lord, one of whom became his wife, Rosa.

I heard Robert speak recently. I watch other men carry him in his wheel chair onto the platform. I watched them lay a Bible in his lap. I watched his stiff fingers force open the pages. And I watched people in the audience wipe away tears of admiration from their faces. Robert could have asked for sympathy or pity, but he did just the opposite. He had his bent hand up in the air and boasted, “I have everything I need for joy.” His shirts are held together by Velcro, but his life is held together by joy.

What excuses are we making for not being productive in the Kingdom - when this kind of overwhelming joy is such a positive incentive for us?

What’s our fuel? Let me just mention the positives again: Lots of Life, Answered Prayer, God being Honored, Real Love, and Overwhelming Joy!

That’s fuel for me to continue to stay in a relationship with Jesus and make a difference in the lives of others!

John 15:12-17 - This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.

Are we doing this? This will make a difference!

**Next Step - Action Step - Random Act of Kindness** - can be someone you know or someone you don’t know - Do something for someone in the name of Jesus this week - and invite someone to join you, sit with you, drink coffee or a smoothie with you next week - right here.

We love you!