Welcome to Church!

We are glad you chose to join us today to worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We hope that your stay will be both meaningful and memorable.

Our Mission

We are a church that seeks to bring glory to God, to build the local church through discipleship and to fulfill the Great Commission.



We are concluding our New Year Series entitled, "20/20: A Vision for Spiritual **Growth"** where we are looking at key passages to remind us that we are *Complete* in Christ, Called to Christ and Changed into the image of Christ.

Next week, we will start a new sermon series entitled "The Main Thing." This series will focus on keeping Jesus and his kingdom at the center of our daily living. Join us and invite your friends and loved ones.

🕏 How Can We Pray For You?

It is our privilege to pray for you. You may send your prayer requests by text, by writing them on the prayer cards provided or by sending us a private message on our FB page!

Discover Life in the Small Groups

We are passionate about community. We encourage you to join our small groups where we cultivate meaningful relationships and grow in our relationship with God together. To join a group, you may inquire from our volunteers at the Information Booth.

🍣 Stay for Fellowship & Refreshments

We invite you to stay for coffee and fellowship after the service. Take the opportunity to meet new friends or inquire about our small groups or about the church.

Our weekend Services are held at the Café Corazon (2nd Floor), Bai Hotel, North Reclamation Area, Mandaue City, every Sunday 10AM-12NN and 1PM-3PM.

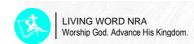
* The Living Word NRA Center is located at the 2/F Northgate Centre, Banilad (across Country Mall and beside University of Cebu-Banilad).

Get in touch with us:

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20/20

A VISION FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

CHANGED: CALLED TO FRUITFULNESS

Matthew 13:3-9 Pastor Nic Sy | January 26, 2020 | 10AM & 1PM Service

sermon notes

	SERMON THEME/BIG IDEA	
ľ	MY NOTES/HIGHLIGHTS	

Small Group Discussion Guide

For the week of January 26-February 1, 2020

Sermon quick review

As you recall this week's sermon entitled "Changed: Called to Fruitfulness," what was the most compelling or memorable point that stood out or confused or challenged you?

Or

Briefly share (1) a spiritual LESSON that you learned from the sermon, (2) an application from your <u>last week's NEXT STEPS</u> or (3) a PRAISE report from the past week.

Connecting

Share stories about your favourite and worst teachers.

Group discussion

Read Matthew 13:3-20; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15.

- 1. From Jesus' interpretation of the parable, what do the following represent: (a) seed, (b) sower; (c) soil; (d) seeds on the road/path; (e) seeds on the rocky places; (f) seeds on the thorns; (g) good soil.
- Jesus tells of a farmer who is sowing seed in his field. Is there anything striking about how he is scattering the seed? What does this say about God? And what does this say about how we should share our faith?
- 3. How would you picture a person where the seeds fall on the path? Read 2 Timothy 2:24-26. What is the Bible's perspective on those who don't believe in God? What are the ways that our hearts become hardened? As a Christian, how can you work to soften your heart so that you are able to respond to God's Word?
- 4. Share. The rocky soil receives the seed with joy but the plant withers when trials and tribulations come. How have your recent trials brought you closer to, or pushed you away from God? How have these affected your faith?
- 5. The seed that fell on thorns were choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures. What are some of these thorns that we face in the world today? Of these three areas, which is your most difficult struggle? Why?

- 6. How does Luke 8:15 describe the good soil? What is the role of patience and perseverance in producing a good crop?
- 7. Share & Discuss. How do you pay attention to God and his Word? What is keeping you from being like the good soil? How can you cultivate the soil of your heart to be productive in 2020? How can your group purpose together to do the things necessary to be productive soil this year? Will you make 2020 a year of responding to the Lord's invitation to live for Him? What will that look like in your daily life?

8. [NEXT STEPS]

Thi	is week, pray to ask God to reveal areas in	your life that are not necessarily good so	λil.
Ask	k that he work in you to improve the condit	ion of your heart.	
	I will commit to go through the devotiona	s everyday this week.	
	I will carve out time with God in the medi	ation of his Word and prayer and will	
	intentionally cultivate the soil of my heart	in order to hear him.	
	I will seek for opportunities to sow the se	ed this week to my unbelieving friends.	
	I will be aware of distractions in my life (e	e.g. social media, television,	_).
	I will replace some of these and spend til	ne with God.	
	I will surrender	this area to the Lord.	
	l will	.	

Closing the session.

(Group facilitators: Before closing, read through the "Personal Reflections & Action.")
Close the session by taking the time to pray for one another. Consider the following as you pray:

- Pray that God reveal areas in your life that are not necessarily good soil and ask that he work in you to improve the condition of your heart.
- Pray for a freshness and passion for Christ and his Word.
- Pray for those who are going through personal struggles.
- Pray for your unsaved family, friends and loved ones.

Reflection. (Taken from our 5-Day Devotional)

We sometimes wish that faith and trials were mutually exclusive, but the Bible refutes that idea. "Trials ... have come so that your faith ... may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor."

Trials are sometimes self-inflicted. For example, risky behavior often leads to sad consequences. Sometimes trials are imposed on us when someone wishes to hurt or abuse us. Other trials seem unavoidable. Terminal cancer and cerebral palsy testify that our world is groaning under the weight of sin. When it comes to trials, the only question is when and in what way they will arrive.

In response, we can choose bitterness or endurance. Bitterness makes trials more painful. The way of obedience involves endurance that surrenders to God's eternal grace. Why?

For one thing, trials point to God's ultimate goal. The Bible compares times of trial to a birthing process (Romans 8:22-24) that will celebrate new life and result in deliverance from all the effects of evil. In addition, like an excellent jeweler, the Lord will bring his most treasured possessions to journey through the crucibles of fire so that he and his truth will be his children's priority.

We do not like trials. But one of the greatest miracles is that God uses them so that we can grow, live, and hope in him.

DAY 4. ENDURING OR FALLING AWAY?

Read: Luke 8:13; 1 Peter 1:6-9; Romans 5:1-5.

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Reflect & Apply.

- How have your recent trials brought you closer to, or pushed you away from God? How have these affected your faith?
- 2. When you read the Bible passages for today, it would seem like suffering is a way in which God matures us. Why do you think trials refine us so much? Why do you think we loath it so much?
- What area of our life right now do you need the most equipping? How will you go about preparing and strengthening yourself spiritually? Be specific with your answers.

DAY 5. FRUITFUL OR UNFRUITFUL?

Read: Matthew 13:23; John 15:1-11.

Our "doing" for Jesus has to flow out of our "being" with Jesus.

Jesus said it this way: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." A branch, apart from the vine from which it draws life and nourishment, is unable to bear fruit. In fact, a branch that is disconnected from the vine is really no more than kindling for a fire.

Imagine if all your busyness, in the end, amounted to nothing. Imagine if the activities and work you're involved in failed to add up to any lasting value. Basically Jesus said, "Unless you're living in me, and I am living in you, all your running and chasing and striving will amount to nothing. Only what flows out of a dynamic, living relationship with me will bear fruit that lasts."

Our own strength is not enough. We need to draw our strength from the vine if we want our lives to bear fruit for God's kingdom.

The most important part of the Christian life is the part that only God sees. We find God's deepest blessing when we spend time at the feet of the One who knows and loves us best.

Reflect & Apply.

- 1. How many times does Jesus use "abide" in the John 15 passage?
- 2. Would you describe yourself as someone who is bearing good fruit as a Christian? Why or why not?
- 3. How have you cultivated the life of remaining or abiding in Christ? Are there specific spiritual practices that help you with this?
- 4. How does one abide in Christ on a daily basis? Read Philippians 3:7-11 to help answer this question. Remember we are forgiven positionally, but we are also called to have a relationship of abiding with Jesus to become more like him.





CHANGED: CALLED TO FRUITFULNESS

January 25, 2020

Questions for Personal Study & Reflection

This 5-day devotional includes readings with brief commentaries that builds upon the weekend sermon.

You are encouraged to take the time to read the Bible passages and meditate on them. On average,
you will need 20-30 minutes to complete them.

Reflection questions and applications are intended to invite you to slow down and mediate on the truth that God is teaching you. Daily application steps are also given to help drive the message in practical ways.

DAY 1. EFFECTIVE PREACHING OR HEARING?

Read: Luke 8:4-18.

At the beginning of the parable of the soils, Jesus begins: "The sower went out to sow his seed." Then in verse 11 he interprets: "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God." So, he is telling a parable about the preaching and hearing of the Word of God. The sower is the one who preaches the Word.

Then there are four responses to this preaching of the Word - four kinds of soil. What we want to notice especially is that Jesus interprets every one of them explicitly as four ways of hearing the Word. It's all about hearing, in verse 8 Jesus makes sure we got the point about hearing, and says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." That means it's not enough to have ears on the side of your head. Everybody has those.

But there is another kind of ear that only some people have. There is an ear that hears, in the preaching of the Word, more than mere words. It would have been expected that after the parable, in verse 18, it says: "So [= therefore, the conclusion of the matter] take care how you listen [hear!]" That's the point of the text. Take care how you hear. Preaching is one thing - and it is crucial. But hearing is another thing - and it is just as crucial. There is nothing in this text about the effectiveness of preaching. It is all about the effectiveness of hearing. The point is not, "Take heed how you preach." But: "Take heed how you hear."

Reflect & Apply.

- 1. What is standing in the way between you and truly hearing God? Is it a willingness problem? Is it sin? Is it distractions?
- 2. How do you pay attention to God and his Word? Take the time to honestly think and reflect on this.
- 3. Spend some time looking for opportunities to hear God this week.

 During your quiet time, ask him to tell you what he's like to talk about.

 Then journal what you hear.

DAY 2. WHO ARE THE SOWERS?

Read: Matthew 13:1-23; Romans 10:14-16.

Who are the sowers? All of us are; not simply our Christian pastors, authors and speakers.

In that day, sowing like this was a common method of farming. What would happen, is a sower would take seed and go "out to sow," preparing various types of soil to receive the seed. What is so profound in this parable is the assumption that seed will indeed be sown, no matter the condition of the ground. Only after we see how it prospers can we, as the sowers, determine what kind of soil we have sowed upon.

No matter the soil, our delight is to sow the word. For as Ecclesiastes reads:

"In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both will be good." (Ecclesiastes 11:6 ESV)

In short, our duty is not to leave the sharing of the Gospel to the "professionals", or to neglect sowing on soil we don't deem profitable. No! Our duty is to scatter on every heart and mind that we come into contact with, never withholding our hand. The joy of sowing, of participating in God's work, is given to each of us.

Reflect & Apply.

- Think of an instance when someone cared for you. What thoughts did you have for that person? Complete the statement: "When someone cares for me ______"
- Think of one unbelieving friend. What are some of the obstacles that stand in the way of this person believing in Jesus and following them? Then pray for this friend.
- 3. If a friend were to come to you and ask you about the gospel, how would you answer? How can you become a better witness to others this week?

DAY 3. CHOKED OR SUSTAINED?

Read: Luke 8:14; Matt 6:25-34; 1 Tim 6:17-19; James 1:5-7.

Have you ever been so wrapped up in something that even when you're at home, you're not really "all there"? Have you ever been so consumed by worry that you hardly notice the rich blessings around you?

Have you been driven to reach that next pay grade, get that new car, or scoop up that new smartphone that no one else has yet? Or how about that slick new boat, that lakeside property, or even that amazing new power tool? If something like that is driving you, it's time to step back, take a deep breath, and ask God if you are doing the right thing.

The pleasures and distractions Jesus is talking about in this parable don't have to be sinful to choke our maturity in the Christian life. Be honest with yourself and the Lord. It's not wrong to enjoy great blessings, to set goals for building a business, or to have a bucket list, but it would be a huge mistake to let anything but the Lord be your motivator.

If we are distracted or driven by life's troubles and worries, or by trends, gadgets, or gains and the pleasures they seem to offer, we won't grow mature in the truly good life God intends for us. Instead, we will let those things take over in our lives, choking out the rich and full life God wants us to enjoy forever.

Reflect & Apply.

- Of the three areas life's worries, riches and pleasures which do you have the most struggle with?
- 2. From your answer to #1, ask yourself honestly: Is this keeping you from having a better relationship with Jesus? How?

3. What specific action step can you take to surrender this area to Jesus?							