



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

September 17-23, 2018

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester:

God Unbound: "Life in the Spirit"

Notes from sermon on 9/16:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

Name a time when you blessed someone else and it ended up being a blessing for you as well.

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. Read Galatians 5. What is the relationship between the fruits of the spirit and human freedom?
2. How can we be more mindful of the temptation to be lured towards the works of the flesh?
3. What do you think Paul means by living in the Spirit? How is this done?

Monday, September 17: Read Galatians 5:1, 13-13-18

All of our readings this week read like forks in the road. We will be presented with a choice: do we allow our actions and minds to pursue life in the flesh, with all of its burdens manifest in our harmful behavior, or life in the spirit, with all its blessings? We may be reminded of Exodus 30:19, when the Israelites were given a choice: "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live." Putting it this way, the choice seems easy. So why do we so often make the wrong choice?

As we continue our study of Galatians and Dr. Elaine Heath's book, *God Unbound*, we will be challenged to think of blessings in terms of the whole of God's kingdom, and not just ourselves. We are called to be in holy community with one another and workers in God's kingdom, and choosing life in the spirit often means putting others' needs above our own. It means choosing courage over comfort; eternal blessings over immediate gratification. We do not do this "naturally," we do it through the supernatural God the Holy Spirit within us. How could our world change if we allow the Spirit to free us from our selfish desires, putting love of neighbor equal to our love of self? What evils would disappear that plague our society today?

Tuesday, September 18: Read Galatians 5:17-25

We try to be good. We try to do all the right things. Then temptation takes over, our willpower crumbles, and we make excuses that just this once it won't really matter, we're only human after all. Living in the Spirit, however, calls us to make choices based on loving the Other, rather than loving ourselves. When we have this outward focus of love, allowing the spirit within us to recognize and honor the spirit within the Other, the blessings can be manifold. We've seen what happens when we live to gratify ourselves: sexual immorality, moral corruption, drug use, hate, fighting, obsession, losing our temper, competition, jealousy, and idolatry to things that leave us ultimately feeling empty and isolated. Allowing God's holy spirit to guide us into loving others, however, creates love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let's take a minute to reflect how each life- flesh versus spirit-affects us personally. Now let's take some time to reflect how each life affects our spouse, our children, our parents, our neighbors, our community, and our world.

Wednesday, September 19: Read Luke 15:11-32

Today we read the first of two parables of Jesus recorded in the gospel of Luke, and read together, they present a wonderful contrast of life in the flesh versus life in the spirit. The prodigal son perfectly demonstrates our most "natural", fleshly desires – how many people can't admit to ever wanting money, freedom from responsibility, and physical pleasure? But the prodigal son chose them over the needs of his family, not taking into account the heartbreak, financial burden, and extra work it caused them. Yes, his choices led to his own personal ruin, but the broken relationships his choices caused proved to be the greatest tragedy. And yet...there is hope. We learn in this incredible story that despite our terrible tendencies to choose selfishness over love, we are irrevocably and unconditionally loved by God. God's grace is greater than any of our weakness. All we have to do is recognize our sin, turn around (repent), and find God running to us with open arms. We can also be God's forgiving, open arms to someone else today. Who in our families, church, or society needs to know they can always come home?

Thursday, September 20: Read Luke 10:25-37

The parable of the good Samaritan shows us what life in the Spirit can truly look like. It's not following all the rules and regulations of a complex religious system. The priest and the Levite were doing that – they broke no religious laws and probably even got to church on time. The Samaritan, however, was a man with all the "wrong" religious beliefs, but chose love and compassion. This parable doesn't have a Disney ending, with the man lying in the gutter turning out to be a prince who richly rewards his rescuer and the priest and Levite being brought to justice or at least public shame. No, this story simply ends with the hurt man being helped. When we follow the call to a life in the spirit, we are not promised the same earthly riches and recognition as a life in the flesh may promise. The blessings instead radiate outward to those whom we are called to love as much as ourselves, making us truly *whole*.

Friday, September 21: Read Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20

Today's psalm holds a key to overcoming our selfish desires of the flesh: *gratitude*. The psalmist starts off with an outstretched hand, but then remembers what God has already done. The psalmist focuses first on his troubles, then shifts his focus to God's greatness. We, too, can overcome our feelings of self-pity and entitlement by replacing them with gratitude and awe. Let's thank God today for what God has done!

Saturday, September 22: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Galatians 5:22

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Sunday, September 23: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *You have called us, O God, and we have refused to listen; you have stretched out your hand and we have not taken it. We have taken what you have given us and used those gifts to hurt others and defy you. We have refused to be tamed by your wisdom. Forgive our inability to recognize you and live out the reality of your gospel. Give us the insight we need to understand your place in our lives so that our words and actions reflect the glory of God in the lives of others. In the name of the Messiah we pray. Amen.*