Welcome – All,Online, and being the 1st Sunday of the month our kids!

Last Sunday Night

Us of out of town, No Wednesday night study this week, Dennis speaking next week,

Prayer: Alyssa’s son Easton, my Dad and family, Roger & Re’, LaDonna, Ken, Kayliani

“How to Thrive in 2025” Series

Pt1 – Seeking & Repentance

Matt. 6:33 / Acts 3:19

This year we want to do more than have a resolution that we’ll end up quitting on within a few weeks, but as we mentioned last week, we want a NEW US! And with that new us, come a COMMITMENT to not just survive in 2025, but to THRIVE IN 2025!

Now of course we our focusing on thriving in our spiritual lives, to which in turn will bring thriving to our natural lives as well! Some of us may know too well what it means to survive, but what does it mean to thrive?

* **Thrive / verb (Action word)**

**- to grow vigorously: FLOURISH**

**- to progress toward or realize a goal despite of or because of life's circumstances**

Now the worlds’ view of thriving is having the best of everything, endless amounts of money, all the things you want, and a life that seems perfect...Truth is, there aren’t too many people thriving today...It may seem that way, but those who have all this, with Christ, are barley evening surviving and are in jeopardy of eternally dying!

With a new year ahead of us, why don’t we take a new road...The road God has planned for us, purposed for us, promised us and laid out for us...LIFE AND LIFE ABUNDANT! How about we choose today to THRIVE IN 2025?

The things we’ll look at in this series will be simple biblical applications, that if we choose to apply into our hearts and live, will bring Life, and a spiritual blossom that you may not have ever thought possible...But again, this only happens if you choose to apply Gods terms and receive them!

Reading through the gospel John, one cannot escape the promise of LIFE, of flourishing and thriving, in Jesus. Over and over Jesus promises that “I have come that you may have LIFE… and that you may have it in overflow” (John 10:10). In fact, the over-arching identity and mission of Jesus (at least from John’ Gospel) is one of LIFE-GIVER.

**Jesus is LIFE.**

* He said, “I am THE BREAD OF LIFE” (John 6:35),
* “I am THE LIGHT OF LIFE “(John 8:12),
* “I AM THE DOOR” for the preservation of life and access to life (John 10:9),
* “I am THE GOOD SHEPHERD” who lays down his life for the sheep, that they may have life (John 10:11)
* “I am THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE” that “whoever believes in me, though he die, yet he shall live” (John 11:25),
* “I am THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE” (John 14:6)
* “I am THE VINE” though whom we have access to and power for life, for “apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

This promise of LIFE is not defined as an easy life, overflowing with worldly goods and void of suffering. That’s the worlds’ view of “thriving”. But Jesus did not promise his followers a life void of pain, suffering and difficulty; rather, he promises “In this life you will have trouble…but… (John 16:33).

And that’s just it. The last few messages of ’24, the Lord was reaching out to take our hurts, our brokenness, our troubles, and our sins, so we would be able to see that as a child of God we don’t have to just survive this life, but we can THRIVE in it, despite our imperfections!

Just as a THRIVING plant may not be void of imperfections, so a THRIVING life is not a perfect, faultless life either. Paul likened the full LIFE of Christ contained in human imperfections to a fire shining through the cracks of a clay pot

* 2 Corinthians 4:7

*We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.*

So, what does it mean to "thrive in the Lord"? It means to deeply cultivate a relationship with God, experiencing abundant life and spiritual growth through practices to which we will introduce, or for some reintroduce in this series. Dennis started with a few of them last month in discussing how to grow spiritually. Things like dedicated prayer, studying scripture. But what if this year we “committed” as we spoke about last week, to actively seeking God's presence, serving others, and living according to the Word of God like we’ve never committed to before. What if we went deeper into the water “per say”? Which essentially would result in finding thriving joy, abundant peace, and a successful purpose through our connection with Jesus Christ. A thriving person:

* *Psalm 1:3:*

*He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

* James 4:8

"*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."*

* Philippians 4:6-7:

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Now to set the premise, before we begin this journey on how to thrive, we need to further address that this journey will not come easy. We know and need to be aware that there is a “thief” that does not desire that you thrive or even survive for that matter. Jesus Himself says in John 10:10, that “this thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy...But as we began this message with, we have hope because Jesus has come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly because Jesus is the Victor over the thief by His Death & Resurrection!

Jesus’ victory over death and sin has given me a choice. A choice whether to thrive, survive, or be destroyed! Thus, the need of this message. To give you the tools needed to thrive in your walk with Christ and live life as God has purposed and planned even before the ball dropped in 2024! Are you ready to “Thrive in 2025?”

In order to begin to thrive though we must set the foundation to which God had laid out so simple for us... Seeking & Repentance:

* Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)

***But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.***

* Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

***Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.***

The verse’s meaning is as direct as it sounds. We are to seek the things of God as a priority over the things of the world. Primarily, it means we are to seek the salvation that is inherent in the kingdom of God because it is of greater value than all the world’s riches. Does this mean that we should neglect the reasonable and daily duties that help sustain our lives? Certainly not. But for the Christian, there should be a difference in attitude toward them. If we are taking care of God’s business as a priority—seeking His salvation, living in obedience to Him, and sharing the good news of the kingdom with others—then He will take care of our business as He promised—and if that’s the arrangement, where is worrying, where is the surviving?

But how do we know if we’re truly seeking God’s kingdom first? There are questions we can ask ourselves.

* Where do I primarily spend my energies?
* Is all my time and money spent on goods and activities that will certainly perish, or in the service of God—the results of which live on for eternity?”

God has promised to provide for His own, supplying every need (Philippians 4:19), but His idea of what we need is often different from ours, and His timing will only occasionally meet our expectations. For example, we may see our need as riches or advancement, but perhaps God knows that what truly we need is a time of poverty, loss or solitude. When this happens, we are in good company. God loved both Job and Elijah, but He allowed Satan to absolutely pound Job (all under His watchful eye), and He let that evil woman, Jezebel, break the spirit of His own prophet Elijah (Job 1–2; 1 Kings 18–19). In both cases, God followed these trials with restoration and sustenance.

These “negative” aspects of the kingdom run counter to a heresy that is gaining ground around the world, the so-called "prosperity" gospel. A growing number of false teachers are gathering followers under the message “God wants you to be rich!” But that philosophy is not the counsel of the Bible—and it is certainly not the counsel of Matthew 6:33, which is not a formula for gaining wealth. It is a description of how God works, how Gods plan creates a life that thrives! Some ways to seek God first include:

* + Starting the day with prayer
  + Reading Gods Word daily

These are great ways to keep your mind on seeking God, but before we can even get to this point, we need to address the very foundational point in order to truly become a person who thrives in the Lord. There is one important step to take that has to happen and always be on the frontlines of our hearts...The act of Repentance.

Repentance is truly where this journey of thriving begins, travels, and ends! We must contain a heart of repentance for the sins that we carry, that we act on, and that we hide in order to become “Holy as He is Holy!”

Many of us were raised to say we were sorry when we had said or done something wrong. For most of us, our parents coached us to make an apology to someone we hurt. As an adult, we may find ourselves in the same situation. We say the right thing to someone we have hurt whether we mean it or not. Often, we feel genuine remorse but fail to make any authentic change to our behavior. Is a feeling of remorse enough to count as genuine repentance? Does apology alone honor God?

I want to spend a few very important moments explaining what “true” repentance is but first let me explain what repentance IS NOT. By identifying what repentance is not, we’ll be in a better position to grasp what it is.

**1. Repentance is not a guilty feeling**

In the Old Testament, Saul felt guilty, upon being caught, for disobeying God’s command to wipe out the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:24–25). But he didn’t repent, and he lost his kingdom. Judas felt guilty for betraying the Lord Jesus (Matt 27:3–5). But he didn’t repent, and he took his own life.

**2. Repentance is not confession**

In the examples just mentioned, Saul and Judas both acknowledged that they had sinned. Both of them confessed the truth without, in the end, making self-justification. But neither demonstrated repentance, and God whet his sword against them.

**3. Repentance is not a feeling of grief, regret, or sorrow**

The apostle Paul once wrote a letter that led its readers to grieve over sin. In a follow-up letter, Paul commented that grief in itself is not the same as repentance. But grief that is godly will produce the fruit of repentance. Worldly grief produces only death (2 Cor 7:8–11). Grief or sorrow alone does not mean a person has repented. Case in point: Esau grieved over his loss of blessing, likely regretting many choices that led him to that place. But despite his tears, he never found repentance (Heb 12:15–17; Gen 27:30–41).

**4. Repentance is not a mere state of mind or heart**

John the Baptist preached about repentance, calling people to bear fruits in keeping with it (Luke 3:8). Upon being questioned, he provided particular people with observable behaviors that would qualify as the fruits of repentance (Luke 3:10–14). He did not send them off to cultivate an inner affection or attitude alone; he sent them off to obey the will of God from the heart. Therefore, while repentance is not a merely outward formality and must involve the heart (Joel 2:12–14), it does not stay in the heart and must be expressed in outward behavior.

Now for what repentance is...

Many understand the term repentance to mean “a turning from sin.” Regretting sin and turning from it are related to repentance but are not the precise meaning of the word. **In the Bible, the word repent means “to change one’s mind.” The Bible also tells us that true repentance will result in a change of actions.**

* Acts 3:19

*Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.*

* Luke 3:8a

*Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.*

In summarizing his ministry, Paul declares, *“I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds”* (Acts 26:20). The short biblical definition of repentance is “a change of mind that results in a change of action.”

What, then, is the connection between repentance and salvation? The book of Acts especially focuses on repentance in regard to salvation

* Acts 2:38

*Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

To repent, concerning salvation, is to change your mind regarding sin and Jesus Christ. In Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, he concludes with the call we just read for the people to repent. Repent from what? Peter calls the people who rejected Jesus to change their minds about that sin and to change their minds about Christ Himself, recognizing that He is indeed “Lord and Christ”. Peter calls the people to change their minds, to abhor their past rejection of Christ, and to embrace faith in Him as their Messiah and Savior.

* Romans 12:2

*Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

* Ephesians 4:22-24

*Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.*

* Psalm 51:10

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

* Romans 8:6

*So, letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.*

Repentance involves recognizing that you have thought wrongly in the past and determining to think rightly in the future. The repentant person has “second thoughts” about the mindset he formerly embraced. There is a change of disposition and a new way of thinking about God, about sin, about holiness, and about doing God’s will. True repentance is prompted by “godly sorrow,” and it “leads to salvation”

* 2 Corinthians 7:10

*For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.*

It is impossible to place your faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior, without first changing your mind about your sin and about who Jesus is and what He has done. Whether it is repentance from willful rejection or repentance from ignorance or disinterest, it is a change of mind. Biblical repentance, in relation to salvation, is changing your mind from rejection of Christ to faith in Christ.

Now understand, repentance is not a “work” we do to earn salvation. No one can repent and come to God unless the God pulls that person to Christ.

* John 6:44

*For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up.*

Repentance is something God gives—it is only possible because of His grace. No one can repent unless God grants repentance. All of salvation, including repentance and faith, is a result of God drawing us, opening our eyes, and changing our hearts.

God’s longsuffering leads us to repentance...

* 2 Peter 3:9b

*...He does not want anyone to be destroyed but wants everyone to repent.*

...as does His kindness

* Romans 2:4

*Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?*

While repentance is not a work that earns salvation, repentance unto salvation does result in works. It is impossible to truly change your mind without changing your actions in some way. In the Bible, repentance results in a change in behavior. That is why again, John the Baptist called people to “*Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.”* (Matthew 3:8). A person who has truly repented of sin and exercised faith in Christ will give evidence of a changed life

* 2 Corinthians 5:17

*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

To see what repentance looks like in real life, turn to the story of Zacchaeus. Here was a man who cheated and stole and lived lavishly on his ill-gotten gains—until he met Jesus. At that point he had a radical change of mind: “Look, Lord!” said Zacchaeus. “Here and now, I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount” (Luke 19:8). Jesus happily proclaimed that salvation had come to Zacchaeus’s house, and that even the tax collector was now “a son of Abraham” (verse 9)—a reference to Zacchaeus’s faith. The cheat & thief made restitution. That’s repentance, coupled with faith in Christ.

Closing:

Repentance, properly defined, is necessary for salvation. Repentance is necessary to have Life and life Abundant...to thrive!

* True Biblical repentance is changing your mind about your sin—no longer is sin something to toy with; or allowed to run the show, but it is something to be forsaken and rejected.
* True Biblical repentance is also changing your mind about Jesus Christ—no longer is He to be mocked, discounted, ignored or just a normal good person, but He is the Savior to be clung to; He is the Lord to be worshiped and adored and to be sought and put 1st above any and all things, so that in & through His LIFE....I WILL THRIVE!

Prayer:

“Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. For I was born a sinner— yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Forgive me as I repent of my sins, wrongs, and offenses.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Which will bring life that will thrive in you. Then I will teach your ways to others, and they too will return to you. You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. This morning, I stand before you broken and repentant. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart but as I have confessed my sins, faithfully forgive me of my sins, and remove them, never to be brought against me ever again.

Thank you God for your mercy and Grace and forgiveness. Thank you Jesus for your love, your blood, and your sacrifice. And thank Holy Sprit for your prompt to always seeking God 1st with a repentant heart to which will truly bring life and life thriving in 2025.

Amen