

Five Marks Of Spiritual Growth

by Sunil Poonen

This sermon delves into the speaker's personal spiritual growth journey, highlighting the importance of God being first in one's life, the necessity of a total hatred for sin, the recognition that righteousness comes from God, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the fruit of the Spirit, and the significance of unity with fellow believers in building up the body of Christ.

Scripture: 1 John 5:21, James 4:4, Romans 12:1, Isaiah 61:10, John 17:22, Ephesians 4:14, 1 Kings 6:7

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Unity in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

I want to talk today from my own personal life and walk with God and break this down into five marks of spiritual growth that I have and I'm experiencing in my own walk with God and that I would encourage each of you and challenge each of you whether you're really taking your Christian walk to the next level or whether you're content with what you have right now. Most Christians out there are content with giving their life to Jesus. They say the sinner's prayer and then they, you know, there's a little bit of a change in their life.

They try to do some good deeds, outweigh the bad deeds, but generally they're not necessarily pursuing God. They have repented. They think and maybe they are on their way to heaven, but God has not consumed them, has not consumed their mind and heart.

So I want to talk about five things that are an indication or marks of your spiritual growth. The first one is whether God is on the throne in your life, the first place in your life. Now I think these are the ones, the five I'm going to list are sort of in progressive order, but they're all very interrelated.

So if, I mean, it's not that one comes before the other. It's the order in which I found it logically progressing in my own life. A lot of the Christians out there treat God or treat their relationship with God like an umbrella or like a raincoat.

When it's rainy outside, when times are a little bit tough, they pull out the umbrella and they take it out of the closet, put it on, go to God in prayer, seek God, fasting and prayer. And then when things get a little bit sunny outside, things are going well, the umbrella goes back in the closet and they forget about it. It's not, things are kind of peaceful, life is, family is happy, no tribulations, no sicknesses, job is going fine, ministry is going fine, the umbrella goes back in the closet.

We want to make sure that, and we'll talk about God's righteousness. God's righteousness is talked about like robes in the Bible. We want to make sure that our relationship with God is like clothing that's always on.

It's not something that comes out when it's raining. It's not something that comes on just when it's sunny or just when the weather is a certain way. Only when we're sleeping, only early in the morning, only when we're going to work, or only when we're here in church.

It's our clothing, it's there all the time. So what does it mean to have God on the throne in the first place in your heart? 1 John 5.21 says, Dear children, keep yourself from idols. This is John talking to a Christian church that has probably long since dealt with pagan idolatry.

So what does he mean when he says, keep yourself from idols? Were the Christians in that church in danger of worshiping a graven image or a stone carving? I'm not sure, maybe, but I don't think so. The New Living Translation has a paraphrase of it that I think makes it a little bit more clear, which says, keep yourselves from anything that would take God's place in your heart. And if we define an idol, as we've heard here many times, as anything that takes God's place in your life, then it's not just a graven image, it's not just the Hindus in the temple, it's not just the Buddhists or whoever, or even Catholics to the saints.

It's anything that takes God's place in your heart, whether subtle, unconscious, or conscious. It's anything that takes God's place in your heart. How seriously do each of us take our relationship with God today? Does it consume us? Or is it something that's just, like we said, when times are rocky or when we need it in the morning, when our daily prayer with the Sunday morning meeting, Wednesday evening meeting, we bring God in.

But the rest of the time we're chasing money, chasing promotion, chasing our ministry as a social pride for ourselves, chasing the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. James 4 verse 4, it's an interesting way James addresses this. He says, you adulteresses, it's powerful words, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility towards God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

First, I mean, he could have just said, hey, if you're friendship with the world, you know, try and avoid that. Make sure you're spending more time with God. He says, in no uncertain terms, friendship with the world is hostility towards God.

If you make yourself a friend of the world, if you chase after anything in this world, it's not that you can fit God in. It's not that you can have that and have God too. You can't have the best of both worlds.

You can't serve mammon and God. If you are a friend of the world, if that is where your love is, that's where your passion is, you might think you have God kind of occupying 52%, and the rest 48%. It's not true.

You are an enemy of God. What's worse, he calls the Christians he's preaching to, you adulteresses. What a strong word.

Have you ever thought of yourself as a spiritual adulterer? We're supposed to be the bride of Christ. We know what marital, husband and wife relationship is like. If your spouse was every weekend somewhere else, visiting someone else, and then came back with you during the week, and then told you how much they loved you, and told you how much they cared for you, and how much they would lay down their life for you, would you believe them? How many of us are treating our relationship with God like that? Are we adulteresses? Are we adulterers when it comes to our relationship with God? That's how powerful it is to have anything take God's place in our life.

The Old Testament is full of examples of idolatry, and the verbiage there that's used is also prostitution with idols. It is a serious sin that I don't think we take seriously enough to have anything but God take the throne in our lives. Even Christianity around us has gotten consumed with the worship of the created, whether it be the ministry, music, the world out there glorifying a woman's good looks, man's power, riches, wealth, power, even preachers on stages.

We have forgotten who the creator is when we have pursued the created. We have forgotten what true worship is, who we should be worshiping when we're worshiping the music. We even redefined the word worship.

Christians today have redefined the word worship to mean the 20 minutes of singing before a service. That's what they call worship. That's what's consumed them.

That's become an idol too. Is that what worship really is? There's no scriptural bearing for that. There's no scriptural backing for that.

Here's the definition I find for worship in the Bible. Romans 12 verse 1 and 2. I urge you brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living holy sacrifice acceptable to God. This is your spiritual act of worship.

Sentence continues. Do not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is. What is worship then? What does it mean to worship God? Does it mean to sing a few songs for 20 minutes, tell him how much we love him? Or does it mean that we're presenting our bodies every day as a living sacrifice and that we are no longer conformed to the world? Nothing in this world takes our attention away from God.

It doesn't mean that we don't have that. Matthew 6 talks about seeking God's kingdom first and these other things are added. It doesn't mean that the other things will not be added.

It does not mean that we don't have fun, we don't have recreation. But that's not where our pursuit is. That's not what's consuming us.

There's one other aspect about God being on the throne in our lives that I want to mention that recently God gave me light on. Have you ever wondered for us young people especially and older why we might be struggling with a particular sin in our lives and we've prayed so much to overcome it and for God's help to overcome it but we're finding ourselves constantly struggling that. One possibility is if you read I'm not going to go through the verses but if you get a chance read read through the book of Judges which has a lot of stories about the people going away from God coming back to God and as you're reading it make the

comparison to the enemies of the Israelites being the sins in your life and the land which the Israelites are trying to possess and occupy and stay in without the presence of enemies being your spiritual life itself.

And as you read that there's a lot of spiritual truths that can be got from that. Judges 2 talks about the time after Joshua died and it says, it's an interesting part what it says in that chapter, at the end it says God did not drive out the enemies living in the land. Here again we're picturing the enemies are sin in your lives because the people were not worshipping him alone.

One of the possibilities why you might be not conquering that sin in your life is perhaps that God, you are not worshipping God alone. You are not worshipping him alone. You're worshipping, maybe you're trying to worship him and worship something else which God says is impossible.

You're a spiritual adulterer. You're worshipping something else in your life. You're seeking after something else in your life and that's why you're defeated in sin.

Romans 6.16 says Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey? Either of sin resulting in death or obedience resulting in righteousness. You can't be a slave to both. You're either a slave to righteousness or a slave to something else.

Ask yourselves today what are you a slave to? What are you, what is it that you're pursuing? What is it that you're pursuing after? Is God consuming you? So that's the first thing I wanted to mention. God being first God being on the throne in your life. The second mark of spiritual growth is as you, and these are again, like I said, interrelated.

As you find yourself seeking to establish God as the first place in your life and as you come to the realization that you are, you've given your life to Jesus you are a new creation. It is not a one time commitment to God and then things are magically okay and you can go back to your old life. You are a new creation.

The second point, the second mark of spiritual growth is as a new creation I must have a total and complete hatred for sin of any kind. Again, like I said, it's interrelated. If you have God on your throne in your life you will not, and you're pursuing after God, naturally you will have a total hatred of sin.

Let's practically ask what that means. My dad has often used this illustration which I found very useful in my own life as well. What does it mean to be a total? The best we can do is have a physical comparison or a metaphor in the physical world.

What does it mean to be a new creation? You were once a pig that enjoyed wallowing in the sewer in the mud, eating filth and now you're a new creation, which means you're a new species. You're a cat, for example who, when it falls into the dirty water, and might by accident, just falls gets up, cleans itself, and is disgusted by the fact that it fell in there. Absolutely disgusted.

He's not just hanging out in there hoping that other cats are not looking and just kind of hanging out in there. And then when it's spotted jumps out and tries to present like it's one of the other cats and says, yeah, I fell into sin, brother. No.

You were wallowing in it. You were enjoying it. You just got caught.

Are we truly a new creation to a point? Now, we will always, the epistles are full of illustrations of how we will be always battling our old self. We will always have old habits from the old flesh that will tend to bring us back. But what is the desire of our heart? Is it to jump out as soon as we have fallen? It doesn't mean we're not going to fall.

But when we fall are we truly disgusted? Or we said, yeah, it's okay. God will forgive. His blood covers this as well.

Or are we so disgusted with it? Think about yourself accidentally falling into a sewer after you've just taken a shower. Think about that feeling, how you feel physically. Would you go into work that day or would you come back home and say, I need to set this right.

I need to clean this up right now. I don't have time to just say, let me go hang out at work. I'll take care of this later.

I'll repent about it later tonight when I'm saying my prayer. I'm disgusted by it. It's not a formula.

It's not something where I say, oh, I've been taught at church that when I sin I should repent and then things will be okay. It's not a formula. If you are a new creation, do you have to teach a cat? Does a cat have to be trained by its parents to say, does a kitten have to be trained by its parents to say, when you fall into dirt, when you fall into the sewer, go clean yourself.

No. It's the instincts of a new creation. And when God says you are a new creation, the old man is dead.

It means that my behavior, the desire in my heart has changed so much that I'm disgusted if it does happen, I'm so disgusted by it. I hate it. I hate the idea of falling into it.

Again, going back to Joshua and Judges, which have a lot of parallels to sin, Joshua 14 and 15 illustrate two different types of Christians and how they address their hatred towards sin and their war against sin. Joshua 14, and read both these chapters when you have time. Joshua 14 talks about Caleb.

It says after Caleb has gone out and spied in the land as a 40-year-old and now he's being granted a portion of the land, and he's asking for a portion of the land. And it says in Joshua 14, 12 that Caleb asked for the hill country of Hebron. Now there was a lot of, if you read through this passage, you realize that Canaan had the land of Canaan had some flat lands with some giants in it, and then it had these hill countries which had the biggest giants of all of Canaan, the Anakites.

And Caleb went to Joshua and said give me that hill country. I am going to defeat those giants. Give me the most difficult part of this land, the hill country.

With God's help, I'm going to defeat these giants. I'm not going to settle for hanging out in the plains and knowing that those giants are just there in the hills. I can't see them right now, but every once in a while they may come down from the hills.

He says give me the hill country. Give me these challenging giants so that I might destroy them with God's help. And then you look at the rest of Israel, most of the rest of Israel.

What happens in Joshua 15? You read through Joshua 14 and 15, and the last verse of Joshua 15, verse 63, it says that Judah could not get rid of the Jebusites, so they live with them to this day. Think about that. Here's an example.

Caleb going after the hill country, biggest giants and saying with God's help I will destroy them. And here the tribe of Judah taking on some smaller giants and settling for having those enemies just kind of hang out with them in their heart. Let's ask ourselves today, which attitude are we going to take on in our life? Are we going to take on Caleb's radical hatred for sin to completely wage war against us? There's no peace treaty here with sin in my life.

There's no like, okay, on Saturdays maybe I'll get away with this and the rest of the week I'll try and be, or Sundays at least, I'll try to keep holy. There is no place for the Jebusites in our land. There is no place for those enemies to just coexist with us.

Otherwise, like the Laodicean church, God would spit us out of his mouth. We're lukewarm. We're neither hot nor cold.

The other thing we've got to realize in our war against sin in our lives and our disgust and hatred towards sin is to always ask ourselves. It's easy to say these things. We know the right words.

We hear them every Sunday. But to check with ourselves every day. Have we heard this? Are we saying it? Do we know it in our heads? Do we know it in our souls? But we're not really practicing it.

We're not really radical about it. We know the theology of it. It sounds right.

But we just sort of become complacent. And this was something I dealt with for years in my life. It was a sense of, even though I'd heard the right message, done the right things, I was in a prosperous land with a good job, safe situation, kids, healthy, family doing well, and I got a little bit complacent.

I got a little bit lazy in my spiritual journey to a point where some of these sins tried to creep back in, in my college life, my young adult life, even some points in my married life. And if you look at the story of David, you look at 2 Samuel 1. We all know about David's fall with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11. It talks about it.

Let's turn there and read what happens right before he falls into sin. It says in verse 1, 2 Samuel 11 verse 1, Then it happened in the spring at the time when kings go out to battle that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel. And they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabba.

But David stayed at Jerusalem. And if you don't just read through the story and pay attention to the words over here, you see that it was a time of war. The Bible explicitly say it was a time when kings go to battle.

So what exactly is David doing at a time when he's a king right now? What exactly is he doing at a time when kings should be going to battle? He's staying home. He's hanging out at home. And that's the complacency we've got a war against in our lives.

It's a time for battle. It's a time for waging war against the enemy right now. And we're just content with staying home and ignoring the existence of the enemy.

Like Judah, like the tribe of Judah. We see the Jebusites. We see the giants in the hill country.

It's a time to wage war. But we've decided to stay home. And what happens when you decide to stay home? The evil one.

Satan brings a greater temptation. A greater sin into your life. And it starts spiraling.

I cannot emphasize from my own spiritual journey the danger of complacency. The danger of laziness in our spiritual life. A lazy approach to our spiritual warfare.

A lazy approach to fleeing from youthful lusts. A complacency when it comes to putting to death the deeds of the flesh. Let's not fall from one to another because of complacency.

For one, the attack of the enemy, I guarantee you, will be greatest when you are most comfortable. It's no longer the days of Job when Satan is going to God and saying, persecute him and he will deny you. We're in a day and age where complacency, riches, comforts.

The most persecuted Christians are the most on fire for God Christians. How many of the Christians who are living in the comforts of their home, not much tribulation in their life but still sin raging all around them. Sin potentially taking control of their minds and hearts, just not visibly have that same attitude or are they like David, staying home when they should be waging war against the enemy.

The third mark of spiritual growth that sort of logically came after this for me was the realization that this, all of this, as I've realized that I'm a new creation, as God is the first place in my heart, I have a total hatred towards sin, the realization that this righteousness is not of my own, but it's from God. And it's very easy for us, especially us who have been here in CFC for a while, to think, hey we're not in this category of sins raging in our lives, we're not in this category of God not being first in our lives, God is sort of first in our lives, and we are waging war against sin. We have been in fact, we have been victorious over certain sins that other people are struggling with, but we've been we've got victory over that or we've been we haven't been defeated by that for many years and we start taking pride in it.

At the end of the day, self righteousness, the root of self righteousness is pride. It is impossible, it is impossible for a humble person to be self righteous. A person who is on their face before God before the throne of God everyday in his presence, it is impossible for a person with their focus on God to be self righteous.

So if you want to test whether, hey is this righteousness of my self or not ask yourself, are you in the presence of God? You may not know, you might say in your head, I'm in the presence of God ask yourself, I mean, here's a true test if one of the elder brothers came to you and told you, it is great to see how God is working in your life and how you have you have matured spiritually, you are you're doing great spiritually, how does how do you respond to that? Is that something where it triggers a little bit of pride, wow, I've really achieved something, I've come somewhere or is it something that takes you back to God and says, God, thank you for what you've done in my life, I can't take any credit in this or the flip side, let's say you are not noticed by the elder brothers for how God is working in your life and clothing you with his righteousness or by a spiritual mentor, spiritual father, spiritual older brother, and it's not noticed, does that bother you? That the elder brothers are not noticing your spiritual progress whose approval are you seeking after? I'm telling you, as much as the spiritual elders are a lens into our life, we submit to them and they expose truths and they expose things that we may not have seen before. If you are seeking their approval alone, you've probably fallen into this trap of pursuing self-righteousness. At the end of the day, your approval has to come from God alone.

Isaiah 64 6 says, our righteousness is like filthy rags, we've heard that many times in contrast, Isaiah 61 verse 10 says I will rejoice greatly in the Lord my soul will exult in my God for he has clothed me with his garments of salvation first step, I've repented, he's clothed me with his garments of salvation second step after he's put these garments on me, he has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness. How many of you

are just content with the undergarments of salvation and have missed out on the kingly robes that God has for you? That's great, you might be going to heaven, but if you saw someone on the street walking around in their underwear you'd be like, well, that person is poor feel bad for them. A lot of us today are walking around in spiritual poverty we are content with the garments of salvation and are not seeking the kingly the royal robes of righteousness there's a great similar parallel of the robes a vision that Zachariah had in Zachariah 3 it's actually turned there, it's a beautiful illustration where Zachariah has a vision of the high priest Joshua and now let's keep in mind that the high priest Joshua was this is the high priest, this is the holiest man in terms of his outer cleansing of himself as regarded by Israel, by the people of God he is considered the holiest man entering into the most holy place and this is what the vision that Zachariah has then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him and the Lord said to Satan, the Lord rebukes Satan indeed the Lord has chosen Jerusalem to rebuke you is this not a brand plucked from the fire now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel and he spoke and said to him to those who were standing before him saying remove the filthy garments from him see I have taken your iniquity away and clothed you with festal robes same parallel to Isaiah 61 the festal robes of righteousness the holiest man in Israel the high priest before God in his own righteousness as per Zachariah's vision in the eyes of God those filthy rags and at the same time when we come to God with humility saying Lord we want your righteousness not this, I have no pride in this this is nothing, all this striving of my own is meaningless, I cannot take pride in it God will replace that those filthy rags with his righteousness similar story in Matthew 22 the parable of the wedding feast we all know this story but I think some of us might have missed a portion of the ending the part of the story that we know, the part of the parable that we know very well was that the king sent out his servants to invite people to the royal wedding to invite people to participate in the wedding picturing us as the bride of Christ invited into the wedding and many people gave excuses they had dinner to be prepared livestock, essentially their job money, pursuits, family others just killed the servants maybe we're not in the category of people who are persecuting the servants of God who are being sent out to us maybe we're not in the category of the ones who are rejecting I don't think any of us are the ones who are rejecting for the sake of we're past step one where we have other idols, where we have other reasons to not come to the feast like our money, our family other things that are distracting us we're past that point we're actually, we call, we respond and we say we're going to come to the feast here's an example of someone who came to the feast and was thrown out if you read verse 11 these are not the people who rejected God let's be clear, these are not the ones who rejected the invitation this is someone who accepted the invitation who said, God I want to pursue after you I want to be a part of the wedding feast I don't want to prioritize money my family, I'm sold on this being the real deal I want to come here when the king came in to take a look over the dinner guests he saw a man not dressed in wedding clothes what was this man thinking? here's what I picture happened everybody lined up for the wedding they were given festive robes for the wedding they put them on, this man came in and said, you know what, my clothes are nice enough I've got some nice looking undergarments these are nice enough for a wedding I don't need your festive robes do we know it's possible to accept the call of God on our lives to reject everything else as idols in our life to be victorious over sins in our life pursuing God, but for the wrong motives pursuing victory over sin pursuing righteousness but taking pride in our self-righteousness like the Pharisees did, polishing the outside of the cup let's ask ourselves today, have we crossed all of these steps but then in danger of being thrown out God gives zero credit to the calling verse 14 says, many are called, but few are chosen I hope that all of us are not settling for being called but we are pursuing being chosen what is the difference between being called and chosen it's very simple, the difference between being called and chosen as I read from this parable is a simple act of coming to God and saying get rid of my filthy rags, I

want the festive robes I want the robes of your righteousness coming in humility and saying my righteousness is nothing, I can't take any pride in any pursuit of victory over sin in my life any pursuit of ministry, any pursuit of holiness in my life, this is not of me take these filthy rags and put on me the royal robes of your righteousness that's the difference between being chosen by God for the wedding feast and just being called and then being thrown out the fourth mark of spiritual growth I want to talk about after we've crossed these three is the fullness of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by power in your life and by the fruit of the Spirit in your life Galatians 5 we know as a memory verse from our childhood, we know what the fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness self-control John 15 says my father is glorified by this that you bear much fruit and so prove to be his disciples, how do we prove that we are disciples of God by bringing about the fruit of the Spirit the fullness of the Spirit must bring about the fruit of the Spirit if we are to be his disciples if we're not seeing that fruit of the Spirit coming out of the fullness of the Spirit perhaps for that period of time or definitely for that period of time, we are not full of the Spirit a lot of Christianity today has been perverted by the idea of the fullness of the Spirit being an emotional electrical experience that somebody magically prays over you you feel electricity pass through your spine or maybe you don't, you start laughing, you start falling maybe you're even quiet, maybe you're even loud it does not matter how do you test the fullness of the Holy Spirit it's not whether that person starts screaming speaking in a tongue that might be counterfeit or appearing to do a miracle the simple test of the fullness of the Holy Spirit is when you get out of that church service whether it be a pastor, a brother next to you an elder the simple test is, do you see power in their lives do you see the fruit of the Spirit in their lives is the fullness of the Spirit bringing about love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness Satan has done a beautiful job of counterfeiting this we have worship songs that are literally just love songs that have taken the word baby out of it and put Jesus in there we call that love that's not love, that's not the love that it's talking about when it says the fruit of the Spirit, that's infatuation that is Hollywood, that is from the movies, that is from the world that's not love, that's called love in the world that's infatuation the Bible defines love as we know love by this, that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters you are not laying down your life for your brothers and your sisters you are not sacrificing for them, you are not giving up your will for them, if you have pride that's coming in the way of them you do not love them, you claim to love God John says in the same book, you do not love your brother you are a liar Jesus himself said in John 15, greater love is no one than this than to lay down his life for his friends so let's ask ourselves, do we truly love or do we just say we love based on our perverted understanding of the way the world has twisted the meaning of love same thing with joy a lot of people out there will tell you if you're smiling if you're laughing, you have joy that's not joy, that's not the joy that's described in the Bible Jesus bled sweat drops of blood mourned, but was always joyful joy is not happiness are we supposed to remain smiling and laughing when a loved one dies or passes away or something bad happens that we have to deal with emotions the fruit of the spirit is not emotions it is something far deeper than that the emotions are the soulish level of our lives we've heard here about the body, soul and spirit the fruit of the spirit is spiritual it does not change based on consequences it does not change based on circumstances in our life true joy exists even when we're sad even when we're happy in the toughest of times and the happiest of times Psalm 16:11 says, in your presence is fullness of joy if I don't have that joy in my life that's deep-rooted satisfaction in God that's the way I like to describe joy perhaps I'm not in God's presence as Psalm 16:11 would say same thing with peace, I'll just talk about peace and move on to the others I'm using this to illustrate how we have twisted the meanings of what we call the fruit of the spirit where we define these fruit or even the definition of being full of the spirit the peace that is talked about in Galatians 5 is not peace on earth because Jesus clearly says in Matthew 10:34 do not suppose that I've come to bring peace on the earth how can Jesus

say that I've not come to bring peace on the earth and then tell me when I'm filled with the spirit I'm supposed to have peace because there is a difference between the earthly peace that is talked about the peace that is just trying to make everybody happy the spirit of Gamaliel which is trying to please both the Jews the Pharisees and not persecute the disciples keep everybody happy let's ask ourselves a question was Jesus completely peaceful completely gentle, completely humble, completely joyful completely loving when he went into the temple and threw out the money changers and whipped them was he completely peaceful any of us when we think about our human idea of joy, love, gentleness self control, peace we say Jesus violated all of those fruits he didn't have any of those fruits at that minute that's the way we look at Jesus that's the earthly definition of what these are I believe that Jesus Christ and I know that he was 100% loving 100% joyful, 100% peaceful 100% gentle, good, kind, faithful in that moment when he spoke out against the Pharisees when he had that righteous anger towards them when he threw out the money changers in the temple when he turned to Peter and called him Satan Philippians 4 verse 6 and 7 says be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts Jesus on the one hand said I did not come to bring peace on earth but he did come to bring the peace of God the peace of God that will make us anxious for nothing, prayerful and in supplication and in thanksgiving at all times making our requests known to God not just our spiritual requests, our physical requests as well our material requests, but anxious for nothing at any time, that is the peace of God which suppresses all comprehension so let's ask ourselves today, are we full of the fruit of the Spirit when we claim we are filled with the Holy Spirit are we manifesting that fruit, not the fruit as defined by the earthly sense of yeah I'm kind of happy, this guy looks happy all the time, he must have the joy this guy is so calm calm is not a spiritual fruit, calm is a personality type there's people who are outgoing and people who are just phlegmatic as we call them just laying low, nothing can disturb them that's not the peace that it talks about over here, the peace that makes them anxious for nothing the peace that makes them at the same time bring their requests to God in prayer and in supplication the last thing, the last mark of spiritual growth that I want to talk about here is unity with our brothers and sisters as we build the church so we talked about God being on the, and for me, and this may not come in any particular order for each of you, but for me it was a progressive order repenting, turning to God step zero, God being on the first place in my heart removing every idol from my life, removing anything that took God's place in my life that consequently resulted in me realizing what it meant to be a new creation, to have a total hatred for sin then, as I've been more victorious in my personal life against sin, realizing that this righteousness that God has given me is not of my own but it is from Him, through the power of the Holy Spirit then, seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit in a way that it manifests these fruits that we just talked about, and then lastly that we use how God has worked in us to be united in the building of the body.

What do you think the best form of evangelism is? Is it going out and handing out tracts or going out and explicitly talking about Jesus and what He's done for you in your life and how He came to die for your sins, or is it preaching sulfur, fire, and brimstone if you don't turn to God? I want to show you an example may not be the only way, but at least an example of how Jesus defined the best form of evangelism John 17, verses 22 and 23 and the glory which you have given me, I have given to them that they may be one, just as we are one they may be united, just as Jesus and God the Father are one I am them, and you are me that they may be perfected in unity that the world may know that you sent me, and that you love them even as you love me how do we let the world know that Jesus loves them, that God loves them, and that God sent Jesus to die on the cross for them? Is it by just telling them those words? Are those believable? Here's how Jesus himself said, people will know that God sent Jesus when they see us in unity, when they see Christ in us, and us united. John 15 talks about, Jesus says, I am the vine you are the branches. What

does it mean to be united? It means that we're like a tree growing, Jesus being the root nutrition always being supplied from the root you don't see a branch that's just kind of growing its own fruit, and having its own food supply from another tree.

It's all coming from the same root and if it's dead and no longer getting food from the root you break it off and burn it up, that's Jesus' words but if it's connected to the root it's also connected to each other, and it's united you don't see one branch saying, hey I need to be a little bit higher than the other can I be a little bit higher, let me try and grow a little bit faster impossible, it's connected to the root same thing in terms of the way it talks about the body of Christ Ephesians 4, there's many verses, 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 talk about the gifts in the body of Christ and how each member plays a part. I'm just reading the passage in Ephesians 4, which is similar to those passages which says, verse 14 through 16 as a result, we are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men by craftiness and deceitful scheming, but speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head God is calling us to grow up as a body while staying connected to the head, Christ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies what every member of the body supplies according to the proper working of each individual part of the body causes the growth of the body and the building up of itself in love at the end of the day when we look at our church or wherever we are worshipping as a physical expression of the body of Christ, ask yourself first of all, does the body have life? how do we know the body has life if it's connected to the head? is it connected to the head? second thing, if it's really connected to the head is it united? do you see the body parts when I want to pick up this bible and at the same time get something out of my pocket do you see those two things working in perfect harmony? how is that happening? it's not because the hand is directing it it's because the head is telling the hand what to do now the only explanation for a body not acting like that is maybe in a child's body that is not fully developed or in an unhealthy body if you saw me picking up my bible like this taking my left hand, putting it on my right hand to pick up this body you'd think something was wrong with my right hand you'd think I was paralyzed, it would just look strange that's what's happening we've got one body lording it over another part of the body, taking on the ministry of the other part trying to take on the right hand's responsibility by being the left hand that's what's happening if you saw me punching myself would you think I was a normal person? would you think I was a healthy person, a healthy body? but yet we see conflict among brothers and sisters not united, not humble before God trying to play the role of the head forgetting that they are to play their individual member's part while connected to the head staying in humility but not trying to take over another member's ministry or copy another's ministry but working together in unity for the growth of the overall body there's a beautiful illustration that I want to end with about the working of the body and again back to the Old Testament, I love these metaphors in the Old Testament about our spiritual life as well as the body of Christ the temple of God is meant to be a metaphor or an illustration of the church just like the body that we just described the physical body is meant to be an illustration of the church the bride is meant to be an illustration the bride to a bridegroom is meant to be an illustration of Jesus and the church the temple of God in the Old Testament is symbolic of the church. Look at what it talks about when it describes the building of the temple of God 1 Kings 6 verse 7 this whole chapter talks about the building of the temple but this verse is what stuck out to me and the house while it was being built was built of stone prepared at the quarry but there was neither hammer nor axe or any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built think about that as each of us as stones fitting together to build the temple of God yet when the outside world sees this when other Christians see this they don't hear the sound of an axe or the sound of a hammer of things trying to be jammed together and fit together there was no sound of the hammer or the axe in the temple while it was being built how is that possible? It's amazing that God could build a temple miraculously I

believe that that's God's calling for us as a church to be united to be united in harmony, functioning together without, like a building without the sound of a hammer or an axe without conflict, without dispute but in humility operating as a single body so I want to challenge each of us here today ask yourselves where are you on this journey and challenge yourself are you settling, like we talked about on Sunday for just your ticket to heaven are you settling for, have you a repentance living a good life no one is good but God it is impossible to live a good life without God have you established God on the throne of your life the first place in your life do you have a total hatred and disgust for sin are you pursuing God's righteousness are you pursuing the royal robes of God's righteousness and not the filthy rags of your own are you seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit evidenced by the true fruit of the Spirit in your life and lastly are you seeking to be united with your brothers and sisters in building up the body of Christ Amen

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