

“Miracle Grow: Through Participation”
By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

July 9, 2017

Part 2 of 3, summer focus: We help others follow Jesus when we *worship, grow and influence.*

We’ve been talking about Worship. Now we talk about Growth. Then we will talk about Influence. The 3 are all tied together.

Miracle Grow: When we align with God’s will, we can bloom where we’re planted.

Sermon journal intro (in bulletin): *Communion is our active participation in Jesus. As we are “in Him” through faith, and as He is “in us” through the Holy Spirit, so we are bound together as the Body of Christ and united to believers all over the world. This bond is conditional – we must believe (trust) in Christ. Then we “work out” our salvation (must get this right – we don’t work FOR our free gift of salvation – but we live it out). God’s plan is that Christians cooperate and participate with one another for the purpose of reaching the world for Christ. One of the greatest joys of the Christian life is growing through participation in the ministry of Christ. We grow in faith by participation or we grow in boredom when we don’t make the effort.*

Jesus invited His disciples at the Last Supper to eat the bread and drink the wine to remember that He would die for their sins. Communion is a time to remember Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. It’s a time we recognize God’s grace and love. It’s a time we confess our sin. It’s a time we are forgiven in Jesus’ Name. Not only are we forgiven, we are filled with the Holy Spirit. When we take communion, we physically declare to everyone that we are followers of Jesus. We join with Him in being

in mission to all the world. Communion is our active participation in His ministry. On the one hand, I receive. On the other hand, I give back.

Philippians 2:12-18

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life — in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul tells the Philippians to “Work it out = cooperate. Participate. Do something.” Paul is not telling them to pull up a hammock, but “work is “back breaking, bone-weariness, calloused, perspiration.” He counsels them:

- 1.) Watch your tongue –complaining = great sin of Israelites wandering w Moses
- 2.) Be blameless/pure
- 3.) Be glad. Rejoice Grateful (we have been saved through faith).

WHY should I PARTICIPATE in ministry?

*Following Jesus (He did it – see Philippians 2:1-11). asked us to do it, too

*Part of the Body of Christ – we all have roles to play.

*Eph. 2:10 *Created in Christ Jesus for good works.*

*Learn (“disciples”) so much. We learn our perceptions and prejudices are often completely wrong.

*Participation is more joy than Watching (Bruce Springsteen “Born To Run” said the whole key to playing in his early concerts was 1 thing –

get the girls dancing. Girls love to dance! Once the girls started dancing everyone got happy.)

-This Tidings issue = participation. Getting involved breaks down stereotypes

***Alex & Rachel** have found a way to participate through Guest Services. They do greeting and ushering. I appreciated their observation:

“Pastors can’t be there 100% of the time. The bigger the church the harder it is to get plugged in. Participating in one or more of the church’s many service opportunities helps it become a small church.”

Participation opens doors for us – like fishing, the more casts we make the better our chances

***Carrie** has found a way to participate through our mission trips. We have been commissioned to reach the world for Christ

***Cheryl** has found a way to participate through children’s ministry small groups. Jesus said, “Let the children come to me.”

***Dallas** found a way to participate by Following Jesus. He’s being baptized (he’s 9)

***Johnny & Heather** found a way to participate through suffering (the death of their 8 month old). This was one of our scriptures this week – we participate in Christ’s suffering.

*The **Lenhart** family story is about their whole family participation (children’s & student ministry, a 10 year old prayer warrior)

*The **Brower’s** story of reaching High School/College students on mission trips.

*8 yr old **Lola’s story** of responding to a Lenten challenge not to “Not give something up” but to “Do something positive.” So she organized a conference about prejudice – 62 people came, along with a local TV station to film her

***Stephanie** tells about her recommendations for anyone seeking growth:

1.) Be in worship every Sunday 2.) Read the Bible 3.) Learn to pray

4.) Intentionally connect with other believers. We have to help each other. No part of the body is independent of the other. 5.) Ask the Holy Spirit for His Help and guidance on everything

Some of these things take Courage (risks, standing out in the crowd, being different); others take Humility, and some take Perseverance. It's all about choices/priorities. What/who is important to us?

***Chuck's** amazing story of finding a new pathway in his life after his wife died. He's gone on international missions

***Ryan's** story of serving at his work, at the gym, at church and on mission trips. He said, "When you serve, you get a taste of God and you want more of that."

*The **Zeoli** family – serving in music ministry and Counterpoint Arts (for children)

***Dick Read's** tells practical ways to serve

***Karen Johnson** tells of meeting a young lady from Bhutan who came to the U.S. and became a Christian – and has now graduated from ORU.

***David Thomas'** amazing conversion story. Bruce Springsteen's book, Born To Run, describes him (he's now 66) playing attending one of the Oldies' shows. He said, "**when the performers are laying down their hearts – If your heart is in it, it ain't old.**"

We have received Jesus' forgiveness and His Spirit. Now, we are to work out our salvation (not work for it, but live it out). We are here to Help Others Follow Jesus. When people join Asbury we ask them to be loyal to Jesus Christ expressed through 5 things.

***My Prayers *My Presence *My Gifts *My Service *My Witness**

I love how Paul expressed this when he wrote to a man named

Philemon (4-7)

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.

When we are active in our faith we begin to grasp all of the good things we have in Christ. We don't HAVE to participate – we GET to participate in something eternal, something which is of supreme importance.