**WHAT WE ARE ABOUT**

Letting God shape us to be who He wants us to be.

The Bible talks about us maturing in our faith. We mature in our faith as we hear the Gospel preached and participate in the sacraments in church. We also mature in our faith as we read God's Word and pray daily.

Today’s Christian is biblically illiterate. They don’t know the bible. In 2020, research by Barna showed 28% of Christians read their bibles daily or several times a week and 52% of Christians read their bibles 2 times a year or less (35% of them don’t read it at all).

There are two issues for Christians in reading the bible. First, we don’t read it at all. Second, we try to fit scripture into our own desires. We try to twist it to support our views and behaviors. We want God to submit to us instead of us submitting to God.

**THE LANGUAGE WE USE**

We want to help you do the things that lead to Spiritual Growth. Hearing the Gospel preached and participating in the sacraments (worship) and daily prayer and daily scripture reading are how God promises to shape us to be who He wants us to be. We live to honor and glorify God and Hearing the Gospel preached, participating in the sacraments, daily prayer and bible reading are how the Holy Spirit to shapes us.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HEAR THE GOSPEL?**

We need to be in church to hear the Gospel. What does it mean when we say Gospel? A sermon should point out your sinfulness (The Law) and then point us to the one who has paid the price to forgive our sins through the cross and the empty grave, Jesus (Gospel).

The law is preached, not to make you “feel bad” but to show your need for a Savior. If you don’t know you are sinful, then you don’t know you need a Savior. Our sins are called out to bring us to the cross of Jesus. The Gospel (Law and Gospel) brings us before the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SACRAMENTS:**

The Sacraments (Baptism and Communion) point us to the grace of God in Christ Jesus. In Baptism we are claimed as Children of God. In Communion, we are reminded of the price Jesus paid for our salvation- His death on the cross. Baptism and Communion bring us to the cross of Jesus where we are confronted with what Jesus has done for us and our salvation. He accomplished what we cannot do. In Jesus, we are forgiven sinners and declared righteous by God.

**HOW THIS CONGREGATION WILL HELP YOU DO THIS**

Our small groups are called Growth Groups. Members record their daily readings and prayer time on a community form used by the whole group. The recording of your daily reading and prayer serves a few purposes. First, it encourages other people in your group as you are all on this journey of faith together. Motivating and encouraging one another is a great way to stay on track. Second, if the readings and prayer stop, that is an indication for your group leader to reach out and see how you are doing. Your group leader prays for you twice a week and if there is an issue you are having, they want to pray for you.

 Too many Christians think their Spiritual life should be lived alone. That is not what God intends. He intends us to be in community. At Light of Christ, we don’t want to go through our faith journey alone. A Christian who lives isolated from other Christians (meaning they don’t go to worship and participate in the life of a congregation) they are easily lead astray.

**Proverbs 18:1:** Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.

**WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT**

We come to church for an hour a week. This is important. However, there are another 167 hours in the week. We want to help you on Sunday AND ALSO during the week. The Christian Journey is a daily walk. Growth Groups are the tool we use to help members do the things that lead to Spiritual Growth.

 We are not called to live our faith for one hour a week. We are called to live as Followers of Jesus everyday of our life. We often overlook the 167 other hours in our week. Reading and prayer are essential for a Christians. To read a chapter of the bible a day takes on average five minutes. The prayer time is five minutes as well. 10 minutes a day is very doable and the baseline for Christians to start.

**WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS OF YOU?**

Everyone should be reading at least one chapter a day in the bible. They should also be spending at least five minutes a day in prayer.

 For your prayers, we ask that you focus only on prayer during your five minutes. Yes, you can pray throughout the day- and still should. However, take time where you are only praying. Slow down and focus on your prayer and God.

**WHAT ARE THE EXECTATONS YOU SHOULD HAVE OF LIGHT OF CHRIST?**

You will be prayed for twice a week by your Growth Group Leader. You will also be prayed for at least one time a week by Pastor Jim. We want to encourage you on this journey and we are here to help you. We will follow up with you if you stop recording your prayer and reading. We do this to make sure you are okay. If you stop recording for a while, this is an indication for us to check on you to see how you are doing.

 Here is another way to think about this. What does it mean to have a pastor? A pastor is a shepherd. A shepherd doesn’t spend one hour a week with his sheep. He spends all week with them. A pastor can’t be with his flock all week. Growth Groups is a tool for the pastor to know how you, the sheep, are doing. It is how we care for you.

**WHAT IF I MISS A DAY OF PRAYER OR READING?**

This will happen. Life gets difficult. No one does this 100% of the time. We usually wait a week of no recordings to check in on you. So, don’t worry if you miss a day or several. It happens. This is one reason we call this a journey.

 You’re on a lifetime journey. There will be ups and downs. Your human. We are not looking to “beat you up” when we reach out to you. We want to encourage you and as stated above, if there is a problem, we want to know. We want to pray for you.

**FINALLY, WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN WE ARE MATURING IN OUR FAITH?**

This is the part that is impossible to directly define. God has gifted us all differently and in different measure. One person may be gifted in Evangelism while another is gifted in Hospitality. At this point, it is individual. This is why we don’t have a program that forces everyone into the same mold. We trust God to develop us to be who He wants us to be. Part of the journey is discovering what God is shaping us for. As we read in **Galatians 2:8-10**: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Hear are some other scriptures about how God shaped us (gifts us):

**Romans 12:4-8:** For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, **5**so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. **6**Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; **7**if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; **8**the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

**1 Corinthians 12:4-11:**Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; **5**and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; **6**and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. **7**To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. **8**For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, **9**to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, **10**to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. **11**All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

**James 1:17-18:**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. **18**Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

**1 Peter 4:10-11:** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: **11**whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**WHAT IF I DON’T WANT TO DO THIS?**

If you are more interested in attending church and not participating in church, Light of Christ might not be the best place for you. There are many churches that would be very happy with members who only attend on Sundays. Most churches determine success by Sunday attendance. They won’t bother you about what is going on in the week. As long as you are there on Sunday, they are happy. Maybe that will be a better fit for you. This doesn’t make them wrong or us right. Just different.

We want to see how God will shape you and what He will shape you for. Our faith should be a key part of everyday of our life and not just on Sunday. We invite you to join us on this journey as we see how God will use all of us for His glory!