Introduction:

“It is the most desolate world in all human language. It is capable of hurling the heaviest weights the heart can endure. It plays no favorites… yields no mercy, refuses all bargains… Crowds only make it worse, activity simply drives it deeper… Tears fall from our eyes as groans fall from our lips - but loneliness, that uninvited guest of the soul, arrives at dusk and stays for dinner.”

- Chuck Swindoll

Until Loneliness is Understood, it Overwhelms -

• Loneliness is **MORE** than being alone.

• Loneliness **WEARS** many masks.

• Loneliness is not a unique malady, but a **UNIVERSAL REALITY**.

Resource: *Healings that Change* by Henry Cloud
You don’t have to be lonely, because…

- God **CARES** about your loneliness.
  
  “The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”
  
  Genesis 2:18 (NIV)

- Jesus **UNDERSTANDS** your loneliness.
  
  “And the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ – which means, My God, why have you forsaken me?”
  
  Mark 15:34 (NIV)

- Jesus **INVITES** you into a relationship with Him.
  
  “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
  
  Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

  “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”
  
  Revelation 3:20 (NIV)

- A relationship with Jesus means you **ALWAYS** belong to His family.
  
  “…so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”
  
  Romans 12:5 (NIV)
  
  See also - 1 John 1:1-4
How can you experience authentic love and connection in God’s family?

- By rethinking your view of **RELATIONSHIPS**.
  - An institution vs. a community
  - An event to attend vs. a family in which to belong
  - See Acts 2:42-47

- By revising your approach to **RELATIONSHIPS**.
  1. Realize your **NEED**.
  2. Move toward **OTHERS**.
  3. Be **VULNERABLE**.
  4. Challenge distorted **THINKING**.
  5. Take **RISKS**.
  6. Be **EMPATHETIC** -- listen, listen, listen!
  7. Trust **GOD** -- pray, pray, pray!
**Summary:** To “lick loneliness,” you gotta **BELONG**!

Informal steps + formal strategies = A “connected” community of love.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. On a scale of 1-10, how “connected” do you feel with those in your world?

2. When do you struggle the most with loneliness?

3. What aspect or truth from this message holds the most promise for helping you with your loneliness?

4. What specific step/action could you take to cooperate with God’s plan to connect you with His love and His family?
Introduction: Life Is Dynamic!

All living things are either growing or dying.

- Growth is exciting!
- Growth is normal!
- Growth comes from God!
- Growth is not automatic!
- Growth is difficult!
- Growth can be stymied, thwarted, stagnated, and retarded!

How Are You Growing Today?

7 Keys to Personal Growth:

People Who Grow . . .

1. Live daily with the END IN VIEW.

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
Matthew 5:48 (NIV)

“…until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”
Ephesians 4:13 (NIV)
See also - Romans 8:29
2. Make a **PERSONAL COMMITMENT** to grow.

“Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?”


“Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

1Timothy 4:7-8 (NIV)

3. **Value PROCESS** more than ___?

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

Hebrews 5:11-14 (NIV)

THE SECRET TO YOUR FUTURE IS HIDDEN IN YOUR DAILY ROUTINES!
4. **Cultivate stimulating RELATIONSHIPS.**

   “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

   Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

   “He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.”

   Proverbs 13:20 (NIV)

5. **Choose to become progressive RISK-TAKERS.**

   “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

   Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

   “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

   Luke 6:38 (NIV)

6. **Leverage life’s HARDSHIP.**

   “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

   James 1:2-4 (NIV)

7. **Make time for SOLITUDE and SILENCE.**

   “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

   Mark 1:35 (NIV)
Developing a Plan for Your Personal Growth:

1. Make a commitment to grow **TODAY**!

2. **PRIORITIZE** the area of your growth!

3. Take one specific step this **WEEK**!

Discussion Questions:

1. Share an area of your life where you are growing. How do you feel about that progress?

2. What is the goal of growth according to the Scriptures?

3. Which of the “7 Keys to Growth” are you presently practicing? Which of the “7 Keys” might help you grow the most? Why?

4. What specific, practical step can you take this week toward maturity?
Introduction: Mirror Madness!

1. When you look into the mirror, what do you see?

2. When you look into the mirror, what do you say?

3. When you walk in the world, what do you think?

Distorted mirrors – destroy our lives:

- The Appearance Mirror – My value depends on how I LOOK!

- The Performance Mirror – My value depends on what I can DO!

- The Status Mirror – My value depends on what others THINK of me!

Thesis - Until we see ourselves as God sees us, we are destined to FEEL INFERIOR.
3 keys to a Biblical self-image:

1. Get God’s View of You = KNOWLEDGE

You are significant because . . .

- You are UNIQUE
  - Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139:13-14

- You are LOVED
  - 1 Samuel 16:7, Jeremiah 31:3

- You are VALUABLE
  - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- You are SECURE
  - Ephesians 1:13

- You are INDISPENSIBLE
  - Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 4:15-16

2. Believe God’s View is True = FAITH

- Faith is built on God’s Word
  - Romans 10:17

- Faith grows through mind renewal
  - Romans 12:2

- Develop a plan to remove the distorted mirrors of the world with the mirror of God’s Word
  - James 1:22-24
3. **Discover the “You” that’s True = EXPERIENCE**


- **Unwrap** your **SPIRITUAL GIFTS**  
  1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12

- **Unleash** your **SPIRITUAL PASSION**  
  Psalm 37:4

- **Use** your God-given **TALENTS**  
  Exodus 31:3

- **Embrace** your God-given **PERSONALITY**  
  1 Corinthians 2:11 (LB)

- **Leverage** your past **EXPERIENCE**  
  Romans 8:28

Ministry is how God makes what’s true “of” us, true “in” us. Sometimes it’s only in the act of “loving others: that we can fathom that we ourselves are loved!

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:45 (NAS)

**GALLUP SURVEY:** Only 10% of all laymen are active in a ministry. An additional 50% have no interest at all. **BUT,** 40% said they’d like to be involved but have never been asked or they don’t know how.
Discussion Questions:

1. How big a problem do you think feelings of inferiority are for most people?

2. Which “distorted mirrors” have made you feel less worthy or valuable than God’s evaluation?

3. What are you presently doing to gain God’s perspective of who you are? Any new ideas that might help?

4. What happens when we get our focus off ourselves and serve others? What and how might that look in your life?
Introduction: “Empty Buckets”

• **Futility** – Webster’s – lit. “that which easily pours out,” hence untrustworthy; that which fails completely of the desired end, or incapable of producing any result; trifling, unimportant. **Syn**: vain, fruitless, ineffective, useless.

• **Fruitful** – Webster’s – Latin “fructus” – enjoyment, means of enjoyment, profitable, productive, producing results and/or desired ends.

“He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Jim Elliot – Martyred 1956

How Can We Avoid Futility In Our Lives?

• **Refuse to Confuse Success With SIGNIFICANCE!**

“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”


“God is always trying to give good things to us, but our hands are too full to receive them.”

- Augustine
• **SUCCESS IS . . .**
  - about productivity
  - “climbing the ladder”
  - about what you do
  - about applause
  - leaving an impression
  - about stuff
  - about “taking off”
  - about now

• **SIGNIFICANCE IS . . .**
  - about satisfaction
  - “on which wall”
  - who you are
  - about peace
  - leaving a legacy
  - about people
  - about “landing well”
  - about forever

Further Resource:  
- Halftime by Bob Buford
- Paradox of Success by John O’Neil

**How Can We Move From Success to Significance?**

• Clarify your **MISSION**! Why are you here?
  - Two things last forever
  - Matthew 28:19-20
  - To know **CHRIST** and make Him **KNOWN**!
• Embrace your MISSION FIELD! Where are your greatest spheres of influence?

  • Your home
  • Your work
  • Your network

Deuteronomy 6:4-9
Colossians 3:22-25
Colossians 4:5-6 (GN)

• Engage in the Harvesting Processing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NETWORK</th>
<th>BEFRIEND</th>
<th>IDENTIFY</th>
<th>SHARE</th>
<th>INVITE</th>
<th>HARVEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal:</td>
<td>Goal:</td>
<td>Goal:</td>
<td>Goal:</td>
<td>Goal:</td>
<td>Goal:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make contact</td>
<td>Build trusting friendships.</td>
<td>Look for felt need.</td>
<td>Share your</td>
<td>Expose to Gospel.</td>
<td>Encourage commitment to Christ. Assimilate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with unchurched</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>story.</td>
<td></td>
<td>into church.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>Action:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish</td>
<td>Build bridges socially. Show</td>
<td>Listen attentively.</td>
<td>Look for</td>
<td>Bring your unbelieving friend</td>
<td>Persuade through presentation of Gospel at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visibility in</td>
<td>love and care. Look for divine</td>
<td>Show concern for felt</td>
<td>receptivity.</td>
<td>or contact to a weekend</td>
<td>celebration service or personal witness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community.</td>
<td>appointments.</td>
<td>needs.</td>
<td>share your</td>
<td>service, small group, or</td>
<td>Invite to church introductory session and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify, pray</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>story.</td>
<td>special event.</td>
<td>growth group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for and contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>networks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• "Sharpen Your Tools For Impact!"
  • Learn spiritual "door openers"
  • Learn your evangelistic style –
  • *Becoming A Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels & Mark Mittelberg

**Application: Into which “bucket” are you pouring your life?**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What did you think about when you heard the illustration about “empty buckets?” Why?

2. What is the difference between *success* and *significance*?

3. What mission field has God called you to? Where do you need help to be more effective there?

4. What step of faith would God have you take in response to His message to you? What will that look like this week?
Introduction: “I was looking for life in all the wrong places.”

- What is Boredom?

“The condition of becoming weary by dull, uninteresting, or monotonous activity or focus.”

- Why Are We Bored?

- Why Do “The Blues” And Boredom Go Hand-In-Hand?

- Could “Boredom” Be A Gift In Disguise?

God’s Answer to Boredom = Authentic Worship
What is Authentic Worship?

- **Definition** – Worship is our response to God for who He is and what He has done.

“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship.”

Romans 12:1    (NAS)

- **Summary** – Worship is the complete and total giving of ourselves for that which we believe has **ULTIMATE PURPOSE** and will provide the **GREATEST REWARD**.

How are We to Worship Authentically?

“Jesus declared, ‘Believe Me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.’”

John 4:21-24    (NIV)
3 Principles for Authentic Worship:

1. Authentic worship can happen **ANYWHERE.**  
   John 4:21-22

2. Authentic worship flows from the **HEART.**  
   John 4:23

3. Authentic worship is rooted in an **ACCURATE** view of God and of ourselves.  
   John 4:24

How Can You Experience Greater Intimacy In Worship?

- **Private Worship** = A.C.T.S.

- **Public Worship** = The 3 “P’s”
Conclusion:

Worship is not a service you come to or an activity you practice; worship is a life-focus, an expression of your deepest longings, passions, and devotion to whom or what you love the most.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does boredom tell us about our lives?

2. Why do “the blues” follow boredom or even success so often?

3. What did you learn about worship that was new or a great reminder to you?

4. Which of Jesus’ principles on worship made the deepest impact on you?

5. How will you seek to be a more authentic worshipper this week?