

# STONE HARBOR

**P.O. Box 4049  
Monterey CA, 93942  
831.655.5800  
[www.stoneharborchurch.org](http://www.stoneharborchurch.org)  
Pastor Johnny Potter**

Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at [johnny@stoneharborchurch.org](mailto:johnny@stoneharborchurch.org).

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,

Johnny

## ***Transformation Card***

*This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.*

Date: July 18th, 2010  
 Series: The Church of God's Intention  
 Part: Part 2 – What God Intends the Church to Do  
 Section: Nurture  
 Topic: Nurture  
 Message Title: **God Intends the Church to Nurture Its Members - 2**  
 Outline Title: “But, In Order to Nurture Each Other We Must...”  
 Short Title: To Nurture We Must...  
 Text: Various  
 Key Words: Nurture, Discipleship

### ***Message Outline***

#### **God Intends the Church to Nurture Its Members**

##### **But, In Order to Nurture Each Other We Must...**

- A. Overcome **Ignorance** and Its Sidekick **Inactivity**
- B. Overcome **Independence** and Its Brother **Selfishness**
- C. Overcome **Discord** and Its Partner in Crime **Disunity**
- D. Overcome **Laziness** and Its Good Buddy **“Wimpiness”**

### ***Related Scripture***

1. Eph 4:11-16

### ***Questions for Thought and Discussion***

1. How are you currently involved in the nurturing ministry of the church?
2. What prevents you from being nurtured by your brothers and sisters in Christ?
3. What prevents you from nurturing your brothers and sisters in Christ?
4. What truth do you need to let settle in your mind regarding nurture?
5. How can you overcome any independence that now hinders nurture?
6. How can you overcome any discord that now hinders nurture?
7. How can you overcome any laziness that hinders nurture?

### ***Memory and Meditation Verse***

“...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 in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ...” Eph 4:14b-15 (NASB)

#### 4. But, In Order to Nurture Each Other, We Must...

##### a) Overcome Ignorance and its Sidekick Inactivity

###### *(6) Ignorance of God's Call to Nurture is a Barrier to Nurture*

We live in a wonderful time of history with so much afforded to us that is good and enjoyable. It is a great time to be alive! But one of the curses of living in such abundance is that the truly important gets lost in the mix of all that is available to us. This is true with material possessions and it is probably even more true with what activities we choose to involve ourselves in. We have so many choices. There is so much we can do!

All the options available to us make hearing God's call to action less distinct than we would want God's 'ask' upon our lives to be. So in case we did not let it sink in last week here God's voice loud and clear:

**God calls us to nurture each other towards Christ-likeness!**

###### *(7) Overcoming Ignorance*

Hopefully the ignorance of simply not knowing God has asked this of us was dispelled last week when we heard God's call to nurture -- that He calls us first to be nurtured (by Himself and by the members of the church) and then to nurture others.

Getting over the barrier of ignorance can be as simple as marking Eph 4:11-16 in your Bibles and giving yourself to understanding and integrating it in your life. Would you turn there with me right now and let's read it again together. Know this passage and in it hear God's call upon your life!

God Himself in this passage has given you a baton and asked you to run the race of nurture. He has run the first lap, He will run the anchor leg, but right now, you are holding the baton. You don't run on your own steam independent of Him for His Holy Spirit empowers you to live the life He has secured for you in union with Him and as part of His body. But He does call you to run! Run in such a way that you may win! Run **with** the breath God gives you. Run against the winds of this natural unredeemed world that God allows to blow **against** you. Run with the steady encouragement from your divine Coach and His indwelling Spirit. Run with the cheers of your teammates. Even run when their voices are silent. But by all means, run! Don't just stand there and look at the baton and discuss its design and how fortunate you are to have received such a noble calling and how good God is to have given it to you. Run! Run! Run the leg of the race of nurture that God has called you to.

So the first barrier to nurture is not knowing God's call to nurture – specifically not knowing that God calls each of us to build each other up. Well now we know

it. We get over the barrier of ignorance by understanding God's call upon the body to build up the body **and by beginning to actively participate in that activity.** To grab the baton of nurture God has given you may require that you lay down some of the stuff that you are currently holding if that stuff is not from God but more stuff that you may have picked up in your natural beachcombing walk of life. As you can see on your outline I see three more barriers we need to overcome if we are to nurture each other according to God's intention. We must...

## **b) Overcome Independence and Its Brother Selfishness**

### ***(6) Independence is a Barrier to Nurture***

We are pulled by the unredeemed forces of our natural fallen world to independence on several fronts:

#### **(a) Independence from God**

(i) From God as Loving/Disciplining Father

(ii) From Christ (the Head of the Body)

(iii) From the Spirit as Teacher/Guide

As a plants independence from soil, sun and water works against that plants growth, so our independence from God works against our growth towards Christ-likeness.

#### **(b) Independence from E/O (the other members of the Body)**

(i) I don't need you!

(ii) You don't need me!

Both independent attitudes breed a separation from each other yet "each other" is God's means to the end of our nurture.

#### **(c) Selfishness (our natural state)**

(i) I can get something out of you!

Left to our natural devises we will look at each other not as those God has given us as people who we need and who need us for God's goal of edification, but as people who we can use for **our advantage** and the advancement of **our** goals. This is nothing more than our own natural self-centeredness. Very normal, completely expected... but this natural self-centeredness is the death out of which God has brought us into the new life, the true life He intended for us, the life in union with Christ and therefore His body. Christ lived out this true life in front of us sacrificially

laying down His life for the likes of us displaying NOT selfishness, but selflessness.

Our brothers and sisters in Christ are not rungs in the ladders to our goals to be stepped on as we pursue our dreams. Rather they are those we are to give ourselves to so that they may be helped towards God purpose of Christ-likeness.

We need each other. God intends us to need each other – to give and take from each other. So how do we get over our natural propensity to independence?

### ***(7) Overcoming Independence***

This is not small task! What is our biggest national holiday? Independence Day! The NH State Motto is, “Live Free or Die” -- Against the normal US mindset of “independent and proud to be so” we must...

#### **(a) Know God Intends us to be Dependent on Him**

- Jesus is the Vine and we are His Branches (Jn 15)
- God created us as His image-sons and redeemed us from our fallen/separated state so that we might once again and always be His devoted sons in our union with Christ.

#### **(b) Know God Intends us to be Dependent on Each Other**

(i) Read 1 Cor 11-14 asking, “How am I to regard the other members of my church?”

(ii) Read Eph 4 and note the goal of our actions toward each other. It is edification.

It would appear that unlike the prized independence sought in our modern earthly American families, God does not want us to grow up and become independent from Him, rather He wants us to grow up into Christ (Eph 4:15) who was and is and always will be the Son of God. Christ is the True Man into whose likeness we are being transformed.

Christian maturity is not independence but dependence upon God the Father and interdependence on each other as fellow members of the one body of Christ of which Jesus is the head and we are all integral parts necessary for the proper functioning of the whole. We need each other by God's design.

So overcoming the barrier of independence first begins with our understanding that God intends us to be dependent

upon Him and interdependent upon each other in the body of Christ.

With this understanding under our belt then we will need to...

**(c) Live in Obedience to God's Intention of our Dependence**

(i) Be Nurtured

*(a) By God*

- (i) Personal Life of Worship & Devotion

*(b) By Others in His Church*

- (i) Receive the ministry of the Word
- (ii) Receive the Ministry of the Sacraments
- (iii) Receive the Ministry of Prayer
- (iv) Receive the Ministry of the Spirit via the other members of the Body using the Spiritual Gifts God has given them for your good.

All this indicates that we need to let God and His church make disciples of us.

(ii) Nurture Others

*(a) By Making Disciples*

As you progress in your own discipleship, i.e., as God grows you up via His direct nurturing efforts and those of the body of Christ you will be equipped to make disciples of others.

Paul's exhortation to Timothy comes to mind, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). See also Mat 28:18ff.

We are not to be Dead Seas but Jordan Rivers. We are not just to grow deep and tall, we are also to bear much fruit. We are not simply to grow for growths sake we are to grow for the sake of each other's growth and, of course, ultimately for the glory of God. We have to take note that the glory of

God is served when people come to know God as He is, which is the very thing that a "growing" Christian experiences.

So as you progress in our own discipleship and grow in your knowledge of God you will want to nurture others through your ...

(i) Ministry of the Word

(ii) Ministry of Prayer

(iii) Ministry in the Spirit

*(b) By Your Life of Love*

Your intentional efforts of making disciples of others should be complimented by your general life of love. It has been my life experience that for all our intentionality in making disciples, God will often bring someone into our path who we have not written into our schedules or who don't even attend our local church. Living out God's abundantly and emphatically clear call to love one another in the body of Christ (see last week) will allow us to nurture those who God gives us spontaneous opportunity to minister to.

(iii) Nurture Challenge

*(a) Get Nurtured!*

(i) Are you being nurtured by God?

(ii) By other qualified members of the body of Christ?

(iii) If Not, Get Nurtured!

(iv) If So, Keep Getting Nurtured

*(b) Nurture Others!*

Constrained by your gifting and spiritual maturity...

(i) Are you making one or more disciples as an under-shepherd of Christ?

(ii) If Not, Make One

(iii) If So, Keep Nurturing

Alright we have been alerted and challenged to get over the barriers ignorance and independence and we are on our way to effectively nurturing each other to Christ likeness. Then there in our midst is the next hurdle. We must...

**c) Overcome Discord and its Partner in Crime Disunity**

We may know God calls us to be nurtured and nurture and have committed to not being independent from each other and so we engage in mutual ministry only to find that it is not so easy to give, and the people we intend to minister to don't want to receive from us. Conflict arises.

***(6) Discord is a Barrier to Nurture***

- (a) It is hard to be nurtured by someone you are sparring with**
- (b) It is hard to nurture someone you don't care for (Rick Warren's EGR's)**
- (c) It is hard to administer mutual nurture with a person whom you feel has wronged you.**

***(7) Overcoming Discord***

**(a) Love and Submission to God**

Our nurture towards others MUST be undertaken as an act of love towards God!

**(b) Love and Submission to Others**

- (i) Look at your brothers and sisters in Christ through God's lens of love

God's intentions for them are good – loving. Our intentions for each other must be the same.

The members of the church with whom you worship on Sunday mornings are more than just members of the church you attend. They are the ones God has connected you with in one body. They need you and you need them.

**(c) Application of James 1**

- (i) Discord is the Trial to be Considered Joy
- (ii) Disunity is the Temptation to be Overcome

**d) Overcome Laziness and its Good Buddy “Wimpiness”**

***(6) Laziness is a Barrier to Nurture***



- (a) **I'm tired and I just want to relax, pass the remote**
- (b) **What's so important about nurture?**
- (c) **Love for Ease; a.k.a., I was Born to Sleep**

**(7) *Overcoming Laziness***

- (a) **Remember the frog in the pot**
- (b) **Note the cost of immaturity**
  - (i) Gospel-Lite won't weather the storms of life!
  - (ii) A little truth is possibly more dangerous than no truth at all due to a false security it can give you.

**(c) Rest In Christ but Labor in Love**

To labor is better than to lounge. We were created for good works (Eph 2:8-9). We were redeemed to dominion exercised in service after the model of Jesus. Paul labored in His nurture (Col 1:28).

The church is the church of God in every way. God not man is at the center of all aspects of the church including its Sunday morning worship service. Therefore, as we have seen God has called the church first to worship Him – to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called [us] out of the darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9). Yet God has also called the church to nurture its members – to apply themselves toward the goal of seeing every member of the body of Christ built up/grown/matured/perfected/edified... unto Christ-likeness. And Paul has made it clear that the body is to cause the growth of the body (Eph 4:15). Our goal towards each other should be each other's edification – each other's growth towards Christ likeness. **That** is God's calling upon you towards me and upon me towards you and upon us towards each other.

He has given us not only the goal of our mutual edification, but He has also given us the effective means to that end – that is His indwelling Holy Spirit who actually does the spiritual work of spiritual transformation.

In addition to the Holy Spirit God has chosen to use human means to the end of your spiritual transformation unto Christ-likeness. You will hear these spoken of as God's “means of grace.” They are the practical human means by which God chooses to bring about the spiritual growth of His people. A good summary list of these means of grace would include the ministry of: the word, the sacraments, prayer and spiritual gifts (See Pastor Kit Culver's, Ecclesiology course p. 56).

Further God has not only given us these means of grace but has directed (even commanded) us to administer those means in the context of love towards God and each other. We are not to employ the means of God's grace apart from love (1 Cor 13 in context of 1 Cor 11-14).

When we interact with each other with the goal determined by God and employ the means God has specified to that end, motivated by our love for God and each other, THEN the body does

cause the growth of the body unto Christ-likeness (Eph 4:16). Then we will be responding to God call upon His church to nurture the church.

Remember the key to nurture is love. Love makes all the difference between nurture and torture, between building up and tearing down, constructing and destructing. May we nurture each other in love!

Let's pray!

## Bibliography

### For the Series on "God's Intention for the Church"

1. Zerwick, Max, S.J., Grosvenor, Mary, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, Unabridged, 3<sup>rd</sup>, Revised Edition, Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, Roma, 1988.
2. "Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation."
3. Clowney, Edmund P., *The Church, Contours of Christian Theology*, Gerald Bray, General Editor, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1995.
4. Spinney, Robert G., *Looking for God In All the Wrong Places, An Appeal for Word-Based Corporate Worship*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2006, TULIP BOOKS, Hartsville, TN.
5. Piper, John, *Brothers, We Are NOT Professionals, A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*, © 2002 by Desiring God Foundation, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee.
6. Laniak, Timothy S., *Shepherds after My own Heart, PASTORAL TRADITIONS AND LEADERSHIP IN THE BIBLE*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (NSBT) 20, Series Editor: D.A. Carson, Apollos, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2007.
7. Alexander, T. Desmond, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem, An Introduction to Biblical Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Theology*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 2009.
8. LaRondelle, Hans K., *The Israel of God in Prophecy, Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*, Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, MI, 1983.
9. Horton, Michael, *A Better Way, Rediscovering the Drama of Christ-Centered Worship*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003.
10. Beale, G.K., Series Editor: D.A. Carson, *The Temple and the Church's Mission, A biblical theology of the dwelling place of God*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2004.
11. Culver, Christopher, *Ecclesiology*, (course on the doctrine of the church), Sovereign Grace Community Church, Littleton, Colorado, undated.
12. Spinney, Robert G., *Looking for God In All the Wrong Places, An Appeal for word-Based Corporate Worship*, Tulip Books, Hartsville, TN, 2006.
13. Ligonier Ministries and R.C. Sproul, *TABLETALK*, [www.ligonier.org](http://www.ligonier.org), monthly publication.

7/6/10