

NORTONVILLE NEWS

"Drawing Near to God in the New Year"

By Pastor Josh Puett

Did you make a New Years' resolution? Many people make up their mind that, beginning on January first, they will improve one thing about themselves. They use the New Year as an opportunity to give up on a bad habit, or to develop a new good habit. From quitting smoking, to getting in shape or learning to play an instrument, millions of people start off the new year with a new commitment.

One commitment that I would encourage every believer to make is this: that we draw closer to God. No matter where you are in your walk, from taking your first steps as a new believer, to further refining yourself as a well-seasoned friend of Christ, we all have room to grow!

This raises the natural question, how does one grow closer to God? There's several ways to answer that question; spending more time in prayer, spending time in God's Word, and strengthening your commitment to following the whole word of God are all excellent ways to draw closer to God! However, as I lack the time to write an entire book (as indeed, fleshing out all the ways we can draw near to God would easily fill an entire volume), we will look today at a single passage, which answers this question: How do I become less worldly, and more godly? How can one withdraw from their love of the world, in order to draw nearer to God?

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."
(James 4:7-8a)

In this passage, we are given some instructions on how we can love the world less, and love God with more of our hearts.

(Continued on page two)

Stay Connected

Sunday

9:30 am Sunday School

10:45 am Sunday morning

6:00 pm Sunday night

6:00 pm Sunday Youth Group

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting at 6:30 pm

Olympians at 6:30 pm

Phone: 616-842-4285

www.nortonvillechapel.org

I. Submit to God

In the verses leading up to verse 7, we are described some of the natural tendencies, and natural lusts, of man. Because of our pride, we wish to rule over our own lives. Our pride drives us to lust over what we do not have, and our covetousness causes us to fight and war with one another. God does not want us to choose the distractions of the world over Him! Verse 5 asks us, **“Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit Who dwells in us yearns jealously’?”** God is a jealous God, and he doesn’t want us to choose our lusts of the world over Him.

Therefore submit to God! We must make the conscious decision to choose God over any other thing. God has a plan for everyone, we should trust in His plan for us, rather than choosing to do things our own way. There is much we can lust for in the world, weather that’s a desire to have things happen your own way, or a desire for the myriad of entertainments and pleasures of the world, if it is not a part of God’s plan for you, those things must be done away with.

II. Resist the Devil

When we are in the will of God, following His leading, we are actively resisting the Devil. Satan’s desire is that men choose not to follow God, and he will do all in his power to do so. Satan’s plan for you is anything that is not in God’s plan for you! Satan’s arsenal are the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world. He will appeal to your pride, to carnal desires, to any means that can route us away from the path of God. If he succeeds, he will make an idolater out of you, for holding to anything above God is indeed idolatry.

When we are in the will of God, however, Satan can do nothing to harm us. Satan cannot hinder or stop the plan of God, and if we are following the plan of God, he will be powerless against us! Resistance toward the Devil can come only when we submit ourselves to God.

III. Draw near to God

Your spiritual walk should be more than a “once a week thing I do on Sundays”, we should not put God in a box in our hearts, and compartmentalize Him into just one part of our lives. Rather, we should actively pursue growing closer to God! How do we draw near to God? We repent, we agree with God about our own sin, and we choose God over that sin! We must agree with Him with all our heart. God doesn’t want 50% of your heart, and to do things your own way the other 50% of the time, for you cannot serve God and Mammon. He doesn’t even want 99% of your heart, God wants all of your heart! And when we seek the Lord to draw near to Him, He will draw near to us. God does not hide Himself from those who seek Him.



Spotlight: Rich and Brenda Kominek

On December 31, 2023, our church membership, on recommendation of the church board, voted unanimously to receive Rich Kominek as an elder.

Rich was born into a Lutheran family in Monroe, Michigan. Through the influence of a godly grandmother, Rich faithfully attended church and was confirmed in the 8th grade. His parents divorced when he was 14 years old and Rich fell out of church. Rich describes himself during those years by saying, "I was a stinker!"

Brenda grew up in Temperance, Michigan. Both of her parents were functioning alcoholics. Brenda was unchurched. She enjoyed working on the small family farm and having her animals.

After high school, Rich got involved in the rodeo circuit. He and Brenda met through a mutual friend, and she became pregnant. When Rich found out that he was going to be a dad, he realized that he wasn't doing a good job taking care of himself and he didn't know how he could care for a family. He went to a hotel room and started reading the Gideon Bible in the bedside table. When he reached Matthew 7:21, he was startled by Jesus' words, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." By God's grace, Rich repented and cried out to the Lord, and he became a new creation in Christ.

While God was getting the attention of Rich, He was also calling Brenda. She was working in a group home for a manager who was a Christian. The lady had a joy that Brenda didn't have. Brenda was asked to take one of the clients from the group home to church. During the praise service the people were singing the songs, "Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord" and "I Can Only Imagine." The song lyrics helped Brenda understand that she was living in an ungodly way and God opened her heart to see her sin. Brenda repented and put her faith in Christ.



Though they were Christians, a lot of growth was needed. After being under the Word of God in a Bible-teaching Baptist church, they were married. They were also baptized together and began building a foundation for their three children: Colton, Stella and Lilly.

When Rich sensed a call from God to become a pastor, his pastor mentored him for two years and helped him choose an online seminary. Rich is presently pursuing a Masters of Divinity, while working full time for Nexus Engineering.

Brenda was also blessed to be mentored by a godly woman who met with her every week. Now Brenda tries to do the same for others. She says that when she mentors others it helps her to apply God's Word to herself as well.

Rich was ordained in 2020, and pastored the Sullivan Community Church in Ravenna for two and a half years. While at Sullivan, we came to know them as they began attending our Wednesday and Sunday night services.

Rich has been gifted by the Lord to teach God's word, to do administration, and to serve. Brenda is gifted with mercy and hospitality. We look forward to working with the Kominek's for the glory of God!

January Birthdays



January 2
Ruth Nietering



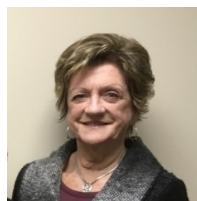
January 5
Collin Hildebrandt



January 6
Chris Dean



January 7
George Czinder



January 10
Linda Dalman



January 15
Harley Boeve



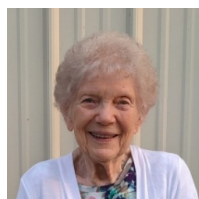
January 17
Ron Anderson



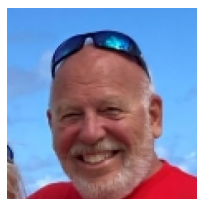
January 21
Nancy Brondyke



January 25
Bev Jackson



January 26
Ann Smith



January 26
Bob VanDyke



January 27
Tom Collins



January 29
Lillian Johnson



January 29
Josh Vink



January 30
Sam Hammond

Calendar

1/15 Monday Small Group, 6:30 pm.
1/16 Tuesday Small Group, 10:30 am.
1/17 Olympians, 6:30 pm.
Prayer meeting, 6:30 pm.
1/18 Ladies Bible Study Zoom, 7:30 pm.
1/20 Men's Prayer Breakfast, 7:30 am.
1/22 Monday Small group, 6:30 pm.
1/23 Tuesday Small group, 10:30 am.

1/24 Robbinswood church service, 1:30 pm.
Olympians, 6:30 pm.
Prayer meeting, 6:30 pm.
1/25 Ladies Bible Study Zoom, 7:30 pm.
1/29 Monday Small group, 6:30 pm.
1/30 Tuesday Small group, 10:30 am.
1/31 Olympians, 6:30 pm.
Prayer meeting, 6:30 pm.