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The Seven Arrows of our Christian Economy

Introduction

I trust we are all getting something from our study of the 7 arrows. I really want to reinforce what my goal for the church is and that is... a place where you are loved and where you can experience God's love. I also want our church to be Christ-centered and Bible-based. We have to not only be AT church but we have to BE church. The first 4 arrows in our study were; **1)** the value and necessity of prayer, **2)** a church where I am encouraged **3)** a church where I am not judged unfairly **4)** a church where we all practice Biblical stewardship. Let me remind you from Scripture why we choose the arrows. Let me remind you also that we visualized a church where we encourage one another and are excited to be Christians. We must be a church where everyone pulls together as we grow together. Are we like marbles in a dark bag or like healthy grapes on a vine?

Isaiah 49:2,3 He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; And He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver. ³ He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory."

Now, Arrow #5

Arrow #5 A church where we grow spiritually

Sometimes we wonder if we are growing spiritually. We feel like we take 2 steps forward and one step back. I wonder sometimes if we really understand what maturing spiritually even looks like. Scripture tells us that we run in a race to achieve the prize

I Corinthians 9:24 ²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

Well, that prize certainly is eternal life with God but it also tells us in II Corinthians 3:18 that we are transformed into His image. The prize is that we have a likeness of Jesus and if we are ever going to accomplish this, we must be about the process of growing spiritually.

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Becoming Christlike is a progressive experience. The more closely we follow Christ, the more we will be like Him.

Spiritual maturity is loving Jesus and becoming more like Him while loving others. I think the final product will have an impact on our character and the way we habitually act out our lives. We must recognize that Christianity is a "relationship" with Jesus in which we are learning to love Him more and more and become more and more like him every day in your convictions. (for example, what you believe, your character and your conduct). No real success in life can be done in shortcuts. The process of maturing spiritually or growing spiritually must be endured. Our support text for today is I Timothy 4:7,8.

I Timothy 4:7,8 ⁷ But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸ for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but

godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

To help us all with our spiritual growth I'm going to give you today 3 growth habits that will assist you in your spiritual maturity.

Habit #1 Gather on Sundays for corporate worship!!

Hebrews 10:24, 25 **24 And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.**

Don't buy into the myth that it's ok not to attend church. I truly believe that you can't be a practicing, exercising growing believer without attending church. Attending church is really the starting point and the most basic spiritual growth habit to develop. Everyone can do it. It takes no special skill to come to church on Sunday morning. Remember however as with anything, you get out of worship what you put into it. If you come to church with an attitude that suggests it's such a drudgery to be here, you'll probably get very little out of the service. We must become an active participant. Sing with your whole heart, listen to the message with a sense of applying it to our lives, give cheerfully when the offering basket comes by, volunteer with joy and excitement. In other words, be fully engaged. You will be amazed how God will use this to help you grow and benefit you. The entire church will be better for it.

Habit #2 Connect with other Believers.

Acts 2:46,47 ⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The second growth habit is to connect with other believers, not only at church, but also in small group settings. It is such a wonderful thing when we are together studying and fellowshiping and growing together. From the beginning the early church always had 2 types of meetings. One in the temple or what we today call the church in a large group setting and the other in homes, which we can call small group settings. The value of small groups is it helps you develop friendships. As well as studying the Word, small groups will allow you to have prayer, care and fun. I ask this question. How can the body of Christ here at OIC take care of you if we don't even know you? The church is healthiest not when the pastor ministers to the body but when the body ministers to the body. You know, God expects us to utilize our hospitality gifts. Some of us are coming to church late and leaving early. Here is something we can do to help connect with other believers. We can receive the hospitality that our church provides in our fellowship time.

Romans 12:13 Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality

We also have several opportunities each week to be part of small groups. Take advantage of them.

Habit #3 Commune with Jesus in a daily quiet time.

The third growth habit is to commune with Jesus in a daily quiet time. Even Jesus got away by Himself to pray and talk to His Father

Luke 5:16 But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

We all need to set aside a regular time every day to do this. I personally spend about 15 hours each week with a Bible sitting in my lap as I prepare Bible studies and your message. But I still need that special time alone with God. The system I use is one I've developed using some information from a book by Wayne Cordeiro, called *The Divine Mentor*. The system I use is called SOAP. Soap seems like a good title for this because the Word of God tells us it will cleanse.

John 15:3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

This is how it works.

The **S** stands for **Scripture**.

S. Scripture

Find a Scripture passage to read each day. I generally only read one chapter. I tried reading more but I often found I wanted to take smaller bites of the Word of God so I could digest them more effectively.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

The **O** in our SOAP is **Observation**

S. Scripture
O. Observation

Ask yourself just by finding one of the verses in that chapter what do I observe as something I can learn from this today. In other words, one of the verses will probably jump out at you.

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

The **A** is for **Application**.

S. Scripture
O. Observation
A. Application

In other words, how do I apply what I have just read to my every day life?

II Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

The **P** is for **Prayer**.

S. Scripture
O. Observation
A. Application
P. Prayer

After reading, observing and applying these to our lives, I think it is a good idea to lift our prayer concerns to God. These may take on the appearance of intercessory prayer, prayers of praise, prayers for our own personal concerns. So, using the SOAP method I challenge you to do one chapter a day and to try it for one month. When I first started this, I chose the book of Proverbs, which is classified as part of the Wisdom literature. Here is something I found recently in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 8:10,11 10“Take my instruction and not silver, And knowledge rather than choicest gold.
11“For wisdom is better than jewels; And all desirable things cannot compare with her.

Conclusion

Let's conclude. I know God has great plans for this church and that starts with us as individuals. I've said before, we are only as strong as the weakest believer. By following the 3 habits I have suggested, 1) gathering on Sunday for corporate worship, 2) connecting with other believers and 3) communing with Jesus on a daily basis in quiet time I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that not only will the weakest believer become stronger, but so too will our strongest believers. I believe by following these 3 habits you will discover the joy of being a Christian and you will want to serve with joy and encourage others to do so. You'll discover that your giving will be cheerful, and you will be anxious to come to church on Sundays. You will look forward to serving Him in whatever capacity He calls.

Prayer