

john 15:4  
**Abide in ME**



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 4 - Number 6  
The week of November 25, 2018

Sermon Series: *The Real Thing*  
Reborn to Grow  
1 John 2:12-14

**THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT**

**Constant Abiding** *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

**How to Grow Newer When You're Not Growing Younger<sup>1</sup>**  
by Abigail Dodds

My morning began with an early rise to get our five kids moving, ready, and out the door so my daughters could make it to their dance class that meets before school starts. By the time my phone dinged to tell me it was 10 minutes to 6 p.m., I was arriving in downtown Minneapolis, lugging my book-heavy bag up a couple flights of stairs to enter my evening Greek class. As a classmate asked me how my day had been, I tried to remember back through the work, the errands, the laundry, the cooking, the conversations, the appointments, and the studying—all the way back to that morning, but it was like reaching through time to another dimension.

As I chatted with my classmates that night—some of whom are closer to the age of my oldest daughter than to me—I vacillated between feeling like I, too, was a young 20-something with endless possibilities ahead and a sharp mind at my disposal, or feeling positively ancient, as though with each child I birthed, I had relinquished a good chunk of my brain as well.

It's worth pondering—this thing called aging—because it's something that every one of us is doing every moment of every day until we die. This isn't something to finally turn our attention to in 20 or 30 years when we feel a bit older or enter a mid- or late-life crisis. No matter how old we are, we should be asking: *How do we age with wisdom and forsake lusting after youth?*

**The Speed of Age and the Age That Lasts Forever**

As hard as it is to reach back 18 hours to the start of a day, it's effortless to reach back 18 years. I can hear the sound my rolling backpack made on the tile as I wheeled into my first college class. I'd just had back surgery a couple months prior and couldn't lift more than 10 pounds, so I looked more like a spritely lost airline attendant than a cool college kid. I can see the faces of the folks with gray hair that I shared a weekly hot tub with—a therapy pool occupied by those of us with “bad backs”—I just happened to be a third of the age of most of the people there. This twist on hot tubbing may not have cured my back, but it did cure a measure of my stupidity: an 18-year-old got to see and know that bodies wear out, but spirits don't.

When I stand at the kitchen sink to wash up, with my teenage daughter beside me, now eye to eye, taking hold of time is like trying to grasp at water running through my hands. And I wonder, *Does she know that my insides don't feel old? Does she know that she'll be me in five seconds?*

Moms can feel the gray hairs about to sprout as we watch our children become independent from us; we see stretch marks appear and stay long after the baby is born and grown; we see crow's feet form from laughter and brow indentations from years of perplexity and stern warnings. We also know what it's like when a few months of disrupted sleep is an eternity, when it seems our child will be 2 years old forever, and when our frustration over how frequently frustrated we are is the redundant black hole of our daily life.

And for those who aren't moms, the reality is just as poignant. The years of work life and home life, on the one hand, move at the speed of cooking steel-cut oats; on the other, they are like a re-microwaved cup of coffee—nuked to oblivion and forgotten before you've even had a moment to enjoy it. For some of us, the ache of waiting threatens to be forever un-soothed as we long

for the next stage, the next chapter—whether marriage, parenting, or the career that’s always a step away, a little farther down the road, until suddenly the road is past and gone. The thing we were waiting for will never come.

The brokenness of sin makes time our enemy, both in the slowness and the speed. Sin is why we can’t enjoy this moment as we ought. Sin is also why we all die. It’s the thing that eventually wears us out.

### **When Age Is Wasted on the Old**

It’s said that youth is wasted on the young; and while I’m not sure I buy that, how much worse when age is wasted on the old. It’s one thing to watch teenage children be oblivious to all they don’t know and take for granted the many things they’ve never been without. Yet it’s another thing entirely to grow older, and year after year forsake the wisdom and maturity that should rightfully be taking up residence. That is a grave time-tested sin, indeed.

What does it mean when the sunset years are spent addicted to Candy Crush and the latest gossip? How will gray hairs be our God-given crown of glory when we’re terrified at the sight of them? What good is age if all it signifies is that the tiny seed of bitterness that sprouted in our 30s has now grown a root system that undergirds our whole life, making sin our sustenance? But God has never sinned, so he never grows old in the ways we do. Nor is he young, the way we think of it. He is the Ancient of Days, with no beginning or end, without decay, without decrease, and without ruin. And what we learn in the Bible is that there is only one way to make old, dying, and dead people new: the Son of God had to enter into time, subjecting himself to the curse of aging, decay, sin, and death, so that in his sinless time-bound life, he might burst the bonds of sin and death and put our sin-sick aging souls in reverse.

Now, instead of growing old, we are growing new. The mature Christian woman is the one who has been new for a long time. The mature Christian woman is the one who’s been with Christ long enough to have the unbelief of adulthood reworked into childlike faith. The mature Christian woman is the one who, though outwardly wasting away, is getting newer every single day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

### **Spent Mind, Renewed Mind**

Yet how can a mind that’s growing old and forgetful also grow new? We all use our minds on something; perhaps not through relinquishing brain cells via childbirth, but in some form or another, our minds are spent. I have given my mind to storing information like: the location of the stray sock belonging to the 11-year-old, what chapter the 8-year-old needs to finish for history this week, when early bird registration ends for my oldest kids’ youth retreat, who needs new snow boots this year, what meetings my husband has this week. And even more importantly: what area of discipleship needs attention in each child, what godly habits could use further cultivating, what opportunities were missed last week for building up, connection, and growing together. All the data and information at times seem to crowd out coherence! What am I but a jumble of seemingly random, but repetitive, facts and concerns?

But this is a fertile place for newness to grow—in a mind and heart stuffed with the details and rhythms of life, worn out in the work God has entrusted. Our minds aren’t compromised by being used up; they’re replenished with something better than sharpness or quick-wits or brilliance. They’re replenished with a dependent wisdom that only Christ can supply, so that over the course of our lives—as we give away our brain space for the sake of those around us—we gain a mind that holds more than ours ever could have. We gain the mind of Christ, filled with humility, trust, and faith.

That night in class, among young adults and older adults, I was reminded that, *in Christ*, my age and experience are means of greater vigor and newness as long as I’m growing older in him. Growing up in Christ is how we become young again—not physically young, but spiritually renewed and vitalized. Could it be that, though I am worn from childbirth and years of sleepless nights and a decade of carrying babies, I am actually *more* of a child now than ever because of the eternal God who takes up residence in my heart and renews me day by day? Could it be that although my mind is slow to memorize Greek—taut as it is, and stretched with the details of our lives—it is still becoming newer day by day, enabling me to persevere in each and every season?

In my wrestling with the limitations of an overstuffed and forgetful head, I have discovered one (but not only one) gigantic countercultural benefit to laying down perfect coherency and taking up humility and childlikeness: A renewed mind is the only way to make peace with an aging body.

### **Look in the Right Mirror**

Sometimes I’ll catch a glimpse of myself that I almost don’t recognize—usually it’s when I’m staring at my phone, on the camera or scrolling Instagram, and I accidentally swipe and flip the screen to selfie mode, catching a face that’s all chins and more wrinkles than I tend to remember are there.

So then what? How do we cope with being slightly estranged from our appearance? With curves that seem more like lumps and teeth that have decided straightness isn’t a priority and, in my case, a belly that sort of falls out of place if not held in check because it’s housed multiple people? Will age be wasted on the old—while we madly google Botox and pine for former days? How do we age into our 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s with grace? We do it with the childlike faith that teaches us that what we

really look like isn't a reflection in the mirror, but a reflection of our Father's love for us shining out in the face of Jesus Christ.

We get to become like a child, a little girl, utterly secure in her Father's arms.

There's a miracle in the wearing on of life. It's that the everyday grind of caregiving, workouts, clocking in, school schedules, budget spreadsheets, sorting email, nighttime interruptions, meal prep, deadlines, folding clothes, and doctor appointments is where we will be remade over and over, repetition by repetition, tiny moment by tiny moment. Such circumstances are not distractions from the main event; they *are* the main event. They are how God intends, not to wither us away, but to teach us his relentless newness.

Broken as we are by sin, we can't conceive of a perpetual newness without thoughts of boredom close at hand. Won't the newness get old—if not in actuality, at least become old hat? But it's not newness that gets old, but our appetite for it. When we are finally and fully made new, with a new heavens and new earth to accompany us, not only will all things be new, but our appetite for enjoying newness will also be new. We won't get bored. It won't be a grind. Our minds and hearts will be evergreen with an appetite perpetually awakened to enjoy our God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

You might think you could make progress in your Christian life if only you could get away from the agonizing sameness of it all, the drip and rush of time, the cycles of Christmas shopping, bills, relational annoyances, the too-early summons of the alarm clock, and the like. Yet our opportunities for renewal are never more than when we realize that this life is a season, a time, a vapor, and a bloom.

In the long days that never end and in the years that blink by, God is making us new. When we come to the end of our days, spent and old if God allows, may we be newer than ever before in the likeness of Jesus, ready and eager to meet the Lord.

<sup>1</sup>Abigail Dodds, November 7, 2018; <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/grow-newer-when-not-growing-younger/>

## STEP ONE . . .

### OBSERVATION

*What does the text say?*

#### 1 John 2:12-14

<sup>12</sup> I am writing to you, little children,  
because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

<sup>13</sup> I am writing to you, fathers,  
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men,  
because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, children,  
because you know the Father.

<sup>14</sup> I write to you, fathers,  
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men,  
because you are strong,  
and the word of God abides in you,  
and you have overcome the evil one.

1. Place brackets around the term "little children" in verse 12 and write next to it in the margin: *All believers*.
2. Underline once all six occurrences of "I am writing" and "I write."
3. Circle each time "fathers, young men," and "children" are used.
4. Underline twice all six occurrences of "because."
5. Place in the parenthesis the explanation that follows each "because."

## STEP TWO . . .

### INTERPRETATION

*What does the text mean?*

#### Commentary

These verses form a very structured and repetitive style that is rhythmic, poetic, and encouraging. John uses three terms to identify his audience: children, young men, and fathers. One possible view is to regard these terms as indicative of their age in life. Another view is to see the three different age groups as suggestive of their spiritual maturity, though physical age is not a measurement of spiritual maturity. A third view proposes that John calls all of his readers (i.e. believers) “little children,” and he classifies them into three groups as it relates to their spiritual maturity: fathers, young men, and children. Then he gives words of encouragement to each group.

**Little Children** (12): *All believers who know their sins are forgiven.*

**Fathers** (13a, c; 14a): *Believers who have a deep communion with God.*

**Young Men** (13b; 14b): *Growing believers in the Word and Spiritual Warfare*

**Children** (13c): *New believers who need training in righteousness.*

<sup>12</sup> **I am writing to you, little children. I am writing** [*grapho*]: Six times he says, “I am writing” (3x) and “I write” (3x). **Little children** [*teknion*]: an endearing term expressing the love John had for everyone to whom he wrote. John uses this term to refer to all believers at least five times.

**Because your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake.** The word **because** [*hoti*] occurs six times in verse 12-14. It can be understood in either an explanatory or a declarative way. Forgiveness is a fact all believers share in common. We cannot grow in a healthy way until we know that we know we have unqualified forgiveness in Christ. Sins [*hamartia*]: missing the mark. Used by Homer around 100 times to describe a warrior hurling his spear but missing the mark. **His name’s sake** stands for all Jesus is and does. Forgiveness is on account of Jesus, who is the propitiation for our sins (see 2:2).

<sup>13</sup> **I am writing to you, fathers.** [*pater*]: An elder, senior, father in age; those of advanced years. Metaphorically, it refers to those who are spiritually mature.

**Because you know him who is from the beginning. Know.** Suggests a past knowledge that remains and grows. **Know him** must refer to Jesus. Two times John identifies fathers as those who **know him who is from the beginning**, meaning the eternal existence of Jesus.

**I am writing to you, young men.** [*neaniskos*]: In the Gospels, this term always referred to younger people. In Acts 7:58 it referred to Saul of Tarsus as a young man. When referring to one’s physical age, one secular Greek source says a *neaniskos* is between 20 and 40, or in the prime of life.

**Because you have overcome the evil one.** [*nikao*]: To conquer or achieve victory. The tense of the verb suggests the abiding results of past victories. The **evil one** [*poneros*]: Literally, to toil in wickedness. The devil, the evil one, toils in wickedness. It refers to a creature who is determined, aggressive, fierce, and actively opposes all that is good, right, and true. We are engaged in a spiritual battle against Satan. In this fight, they have the certainty of victory because of Jesus’ victory at the cross.

**I write to you, children.** [*paidion*]: This is a different word from verse 12. It describes a young child who requires spiritual training and discipline. In John 21:5, Jesus addresses His disciples as children [*paidion*].

**Because you know the Father.** All Christians, young and old in the faith, have come to know God.

<sup>14</sup> **I write to you, fathers.** [*Grapho*]: is expressed in the aorist tense. Why John changes tense is difficult to know other than it was a stylistic difference.

**Because you know him who is from the beginning.** Our knowledge of God deepens as we grow.

**I write to you, young men.** [*neaniskos*]: See comment on verse 13.

**Because you are strong.** The source of their strength is not self-developed but imparted by God. There are two reasons for their spiritual strength and vitality: (1) **The word of God abides in you.** (2) **and you have overcome the evil one.** [*nikao*]: The certainty of victory is repeated for emphasis. The **evil one** is Satan.

**Sermon Notes:**

*(This area contains multiple horizontal lines for writing.)*

**THIS WEEK'S  
COMPLEMENTARY PASSAGE**

**1 Peter 1:13-25**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." <sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. <sup>20</sup> He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

<sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup> for

"All flesh is like grass  
and all its glory like the flower of grass.  
The grass withers,  
and the flower falls,  
<sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever."  
And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

STEP THREE . . .

**EXPLORING** the passage through discussion

**Questions**

1. Read 1 John 2:12-14. In verse 12, John refers to all Christians as dear children. How is John affirming all Christians in their faith? Why is it vital for a believer to know their sins are forgiven in order for more growth to occur?
2. In this passage John identifies three groups. List each group, note where there is overlap, and determine the distinction between each one.
3. In your spiritual life, which of the three stages John addresses in verses 12-14 can you most relate to: fathers, young men, children? Why did you pick that stage?
4. Why is it important to know your current stage?

5. Recall a time when you experienced growth. What factors do you think led to that growth?

6. In what ways do you hope to grow in the coming year?

7. What can you do to encourage someone at an earlier stage?

8. What can you do to learn from someone who's ahead of you?

#### **A Prayer**

*Holy Father, You have called us to grow in grace, to grow in our knowledge of Jesus  
and to develop a close and intimate relationship with You.*

*Lord, this is what I desire to do,  
and I pray I may come to know You more and more each day.*

*Thank You, Father, for the Bible, which is written to help me understand Your Word of truth,  
to rejoice knowing that my sins are forgiven because of the cross.*

*Thank You for the indwelling Holy Spirit,  
Who has promised to guide me in the way that I should go.*

*I pray that I may learn to walk in spirit and truth  
so that I may mature in my Christian faith –  
as I study the Bible and abide in Christ.*

*Amen.*

#### **STEP FOUR . . .**

##### **APPLYING**

How is the text lived out?

*Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22*

*Do a quick assessment of the various areas of your life:  
intellectual, physical, mental, relational, and spiritual.  
Think about how you would like to grow in each of these areas.*

Visit: <https://gospelforlife.com/assessment> for a helpful tool in taking your next steps.

Sunday, November 25 thru Saturday, December 1, 2018  
Joel 1-3, Psalm 149; Micah 1-3, Psalm 150; Micah 4-5, Isaiah 40;  
Micah 6-7, Isaiah 41; 2 Thessalonians 1-3, Isaiah 42

## THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

### 10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

**Undiluted Worship** *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

**Constant Abiding** *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

**Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

**Desperate Prayer** *Psalm 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and finding direction for daily life.

**Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

**Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

**Total Forgiveness** *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

**Tangible Compassion** *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

**Generous Giving** *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

**God Space** *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

## Memory Verse

### 1 John 2:14

<sup>14</sup> I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.  
I write to you, young men, because you are strong,  
and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.