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IGNITING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, WORD, CHURCH AND RELATIONSHIP IN 2014.

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Matthew 5:16 - *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.*

I humbly ask that we, the Salem United Methodist Church Family, will pray and meditate on this vision for our church - **IGNITING THE FRUIT of the SPIRIT, WORD, CHURCH and RELATIONSHIP in 2014.**

Fulfilling this purpose will require passion, zeal or enthusiasm. 'Purpose' has to do with our head – thinking right about why we're here and understanding our calling. 'Passion' has to do with our heart – the internal fire that motivates us and energizes us, that ignites us to fulfill our purpose and do God's will. God is the source of spiritual passion. The Holy Spirit comes to **IGNITE** us with holy fire.

How do you ignite your passion or keep it burning? We can pray for passion and ask God to put his fire within us again. Jesus desires to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire (**Matt.3: 11-12. Luke 3: 16. Acts 2:3-4**). We can do things that help us return to our 'first love' (**Rev.2: 4-5**), including dealing positively with negative emotions that have settled into our spirit. We can activate our spiritual gifts (**1 Tim.4: 14-16**) and serve wholeheartedly (**Col.3:23**). Sometimes we have to stir up this flame of passion within us (**2 Tim.1:6-7**). We can also associate with people of passion – people who encourage and inspire you (**Heb.10:24-25**).

Ignite –

- To cause to burn.
- To explode.
- To set fire to.
- To subject to great heat, especially to make luminous by heat.
- To arouse the passions; excite.

The three elements needed to cause a fire are a source of fuel that is flammable, oxygen from air or other sources and a flame or other source of heat.

But there is a fourth element – there must be a chemical reaction with fuel, oxygen, and heat in the correct levels in order for fire or ignition to occur.

Light, lamps, and lampstands (or candlesticks) are referred to numerous times in Scripture. Let's take a closer look at oil lamps. Oil lamps have been in existence since 1500 B.C. and must be maintained. The maintenance of these oil lamps can be related to our spiritual lives.

Look at an oil lamp - the fuel is infused in the wick, and when oxygen and fire is added, the light burns ever so brightly.

This morning, I don't believe that it's the availability of the oil, as much as it may be the condition of **our** wicks that keep us from burning brightly for Christ.

In **Matthew 5**, Jesus is speaking to a large crowd, but more directly to His disciples, and He says, *"Let your light so shine before humanity, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

This morning, I'd like for us to look at the condition of our wicks (our heart's condition) and see if there are some changes needed in order for us as individuals, and as a congregation, to shine brighter and better for God in 2014.

What is potentially wrong with a wick that won't burn brightly?

A. First, it will not burn brightly if it is Dry.

1. One of the things that is vital for a wick to burn brightly is that it must be soaked in oil. The wick is typically made of cotton or some other absorbent material and as the wick absorbs the oil, the oil provides the fuel and burns.

2. In the Bible, you'll find that many Scriptures that refer to oil actually relate it symbolically to the Holy Spirit.

- a. This is such a great fit. In order for us to burn brightly, we must allow the Holy Spirit to saturate us or fill us.

- b. The supply is abundant. We do not have an oil shortage when it comes to the Holy Spirit's availability and desire to fill us, but it's the condition of the wick, or our hearts, that determines if we will burn brightly or just spark and burn out.

- c. We need to give diligence to soaking up God's Word, and obediently responding to His direction. Being filled with the Holy Spirit.

3. **Ephesians 5:18** says, *but ever be filled and stimulated with the Holy Spirit.*

Nothing else provides the necessary fuel for the Christian life.

Another potential problem with our wick (or heart) is that it...

B. Needs Trimming

1. This expression is used when relating to candles or kerosene lamps.

- One of our hymns written by Fanny Crosby says -

“When Jesus comes to reward His servants, whether it be noon or night,
Faithful to Him will He find us watching,
With our lamps all trimmed and bright?”

2. If a wick goes untrimmed it will do nothing more than smoke and cause a mess - its ability to deliver light will be rendered ineffective.

3. Spiritually speaking, this is where we often find ourselves.

a. Doing things just for the sake of doing them. There’s really no power or passion or light behind what we’re doing, its just smoke... and it has the potential of causing a mess.

b. What happens when we just go through the motions? Our hearts, like a wick, can grow crusted and hard.

- Our hearts need to be trimmed
- Our attitudes need to be corrected
- Our priorities need re-defining

c. We need to realize that it’s not about me; it’s all about bringing the light of Jesus Christ to this community so that people will glorify God.

d. David writes in **Psalm 51:10-13** - *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me by your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.*

4. It’s about getting our hearts trimmed and bright, and then sending the light and love of Jesus into the lives of those living in darkness.

5. If we’ll allow God to trim us, if we’ll give the Holy Spirit room to fill us...I believe wholeheartedly that we’ll see

More souls saved

More relationships created

More lives enriched

More depth
More passion...in 2014

Our prayer should be... “God ignite our wicks in 2014 so that THE FRUIT of the SPIRIT, WORD, CHURCH and RELATIONSHIP will be ignited and burn brightly in 2014!

C. Lamps with multiple wicks deliver greater light.

- Seems this should go without saying, yet many miss the command and the spiritual significance of joining their wicks to a lamp or lampstand.

1. **Matthew 5:14** *A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*

2. You'll find in the New Testament, that Jesus references a candlestick or lampstand 5 times...and each time He is referring to a place where individual wicks (or people) are brought together for a focused purpose.

a. That (place) or lampstand is the Lord's local Church, and by joining together we can better light our community and world.

b. Adding our wicks together...fueled from the proper source – Holy Spirit...lit for the proper purpose – saving souls for Jesus Christ.

D. A wick cannot light itself!

1. It must be lit by Someone with the power to ignite us!

2. Let me point you to the One who can make our hearts blaze...or better yet, let me tell you what some disciples said after hearing of the news of Jesus' resurrection - **Luke 24:32** *And they said to one another, “Didn't our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”*

God, ignite our wicks in 2014!

This morning, I don't know the condition of everyone's wicks...

Perhaps you're here and you know Christ as Savior, but your spiritual life seems a bit dry.

- I want you to know that the oil supply is abundant. God's Holy Spirit stands ready to fill us, but it's up to us to humbly and honestly come to the fountain. Maybe you're here, and your heart has grown a bit crusty and hard...you keep doing the same old things, trying to light on your own...Jesus stands ready to

ignite you...whether you need renewal, or you need to come for the first time and receive Him as Savior.

Perhaps you're here and you need to add your wick to God's candlestick here at Salem United Methodist Church. We stand with open heart to receive you just as you are and with open hands to serve you with grace and hospitality.

Understand your purpose and then ask God to fill you with passion to pursue it. Focus your passion on fulfilling your purpose. Passionately love God, love people, change and grow, serve and reach out. We are to be a passionate people like our God. God desires passionate believers. God's mission for Salem United Methodist Church is for us to be a group of "fervent/passionate" followers of Jesus Christ.

Let this be the year I...you...we...us.... shine better and brighter for God!

Portions adapted from Sonny Hyde and [Russ Witkowski](#)