

The Watford Word

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What's on

Sunday 21 April - 10:30AM. Charl speaking
Sunday 28 April - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking
Sunday 05 May - 10:30AM. Lance speaking
Sunday 12 May - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking
Pentecost Sunday 19 May - 10:30AM.
International Sunday and international food
Sunday 26 May - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking
Sunday 02 June - 10:30AM. Visiting speaker Dr John Oakes (<https://evidenceforchristianity.org/>)
Sunday 14 July - 10:30AM. Kerry Mathurin speaks

Welcoming Dr Sean & Erin St. Jean

I am delighted we can welcome Dr Sean St. Jean and his wife, Erin, to our fellowship this Sunday. Sean has become my dear friend and has been part of the team running the retreat mentioned previously. He is a member of our sister church in Vancouver, Canada, and teaches graduate social workers as a professor. He also has his own private therapy practice.

His book, *Spiritual Trauma: A Guide to Healing Your Heart From Church Hurts*, came out recently. I highly recommend it.

We are privileged to have them with us and hear Sean preach this morning. Please get to know them and extend our traditionally warm Watford welcome to them both.

Malcolm

New Creation - New Picture of Self

Reflecting on Our Inner Image

Have you ever seen yourself on video? I first saw myself on film during a preaching training session. Did I *really* stand like that? Why was my face contorting? What was I doing, staring at the

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floor while speaking? It was an eye-opening experience.

However, our internal view of ourselves is more significant than physical behaviour.

1. The Importance of Self-Perception



Often, we carry unhealthy scripts in our minds, oscillating between "I'm not good enough" and "I'm the centre of the universe." As Christians, it's vital to develop a healthy view of ourselves because our

growth into a new creation hinges on cooperating with God's transformative process (2 Corinthians 3:18):

"And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."

Our image of ourselves is both a symptom and cause of ongoing spiritual formation.

2. Understanding Our Identity

What can we say about who we are?

Firstly, we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27):

"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

There's a notable distinction between humanity and other creatures—we were directly created by God, imbued with immeasurable value.

Secondly, we are already accepted as God's beloved. John 3:16 illustrates God's profound love for humanity, demonstrated through Jesus:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

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Even Jesus needed reminders of His belovedness (Mark 1:11; Matthew 17:5), emphasising our need for reassurance. We receive this by trusting what Jesus said to his followers in John 15.9

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love."

We are as beloved of Jesus as he is beloved by Father God. To be spiritually healthy means working from a place of acceptance, not for acceptance. Do we genuinely believe that nothing we do can make God love us more or less?

Lastly, our spiritual condition is marred by inherent flaws. As Martin Luther put it:

"Scripture describes man as curved in upon himself to such an extent that he bends not only physical, but also spiritual goods towards himself, seeking himself in all things."

Therefore we require God's transformative work (James 1:2-4):

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

This work of God needs to be done not so we become loveable but because he loves us so we can better represent him in this world.

Cultivating a Healthy Self-Image

Let me offer you some practices to help you create a more healthy picture of yourself—in other words, to see yourself as God sees you.

- Every morning, when you wake up, ask God to give you an awareness of his personal love for you.
- Try repeating this phrase at various points throughout the day: "I am one in whom Christ dwells and delights—and I live in the strong and unshakeable kingdom of God."
- Meditate on a Scripture reassuring you of God's love, such as Romans 8.38-39
- Study Psalm 23 and the attitude of the shepherd (God) to his sheep (you).
- Pray through Psalm 103, a Psalm that praises God for His compassion and forgiveness. It

emphasises God's love and mercy towards those who fear Him.

What has helped you shift your view of yourself towards how God sees you? Do you sense the Lord at work right now, transforming your view of yourself further? Please share your experiences with another member here. We learn best when we are learning in community.

Your brother, Malcolm

Unity Process Update

The UK & Ireland unity process enters its next stage later this month. Representatives from many of our sister congregations will gather in London over the final weekend of April. Please pray those conversations move us towards creating a healthy unity culture for our churches.

Watford Contribution Details

If you want to donate to the work of the church here, please go to this link and look for the 'ICC Missions standing order and gift aid form' — <https://watfordchurchofchrist.org/podcasts>

Watford Media

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj9Qa8D9zumJZdoAtARDUww>

Podcast: <https://www.podbean.com/pu/pbblog-aiinq-raef9o>

ICCM Teen Camp

