

NOT SO SECRET SAUCE

SERIESWEEK 1

Not So Secret Sauce: Week 1

Goodness

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:3-8 / Ephesians 2:8-10

Write Up: Doing good works does not save us. Receiving God's grace through faith is what makes us a Christian. The first ingredient in being a follower of Jesus is displaying goodness in our life. We are God's workmanship that He has designed to make a difference in the world. When we do good works, we fulfill our purpose in life.

Think: We do good works in response to salvation, not to receive salvation.

Feel: God made me with a purpose that I can discover and live out.

Do: Find practical ways to do good in the area God has placed you.

Sermon:

Good morning, church, and welcome to worship this morning. We have gathered here today to hear from God and to be filled by Him. This morning we are beginning a brand-new series called Not So Secret Sauce. We are taking a look at how the life God wants for you is more accessible than you think. He is not trying to keep you in the dark, he wants you to know His best for you.

Story: There are few fast food meals that are as iconic as McDonald's Big Mac. The sandwich has been around more than 50 years and is still one of the most popular items on the menu. In fact, the sandwich had its own jingle. Sing it with me if you know it... two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions — on a sesame seed bun. The truth is that the burger itself is not that much different than any other burger at the Golden Arches. What sets this meal apart is its famous Special Sauce. Originally the sauce was called "secret sauce" before being changed to "Special Sauce" in 1974. To this day, this "special sauce" is kept hidden from public knowledge. In fact, to prevent employees from stealing the recipe, there is a non-disclosure agreement that must be signed, and the sauce is delivered in sealed containers to each restaurant location. Needless to say, McDonald's is serious about keeping their sauce to themselves.

Like the big Mac "special sauce", Christian discipleship can seem elusive and mysterious. Many of us believe that the full life of God must be some kind of highly technical and closely guarded secret that only the most holy and the most Godly individuals are privileged to know. Like a famous chef might keep their recipes from the world and ensure that they stay locked in a vault somewhere, we sometimes suppose that God has the same kind of attitude toward His blessings in our lives.

This could not be further from the truth. Instead, God has given us clear instruction for living a life that is connected to Him and empowered by Him. The Bible is full of such instruction, but maybe most clearly, we are given a passage in 2 Peter that lays it all out for us. Peter is writing to the early church as a way of helping them grow in their faith and become all God wants for them to be.

READ 2 Peter 1:3-4

Peter tells his readers... Do not spend your time feeling like you have somehow missed some kind of secret that others received. Do not be tricked into believing that you are not equipped to live a Godly life. Peter makes a bold statement by saying that we have everything we need for life and godliness. God's divine power has been placed inside of us and all we have to do is awaken to it.

POINT #1 – YOU HAVE ALL THE INGREDIENTS FOR FAITH

During the time that Peter was writing this letter, there was a sect of people called the Gnostics. The Gnostics emphasized a secret knowledge of the things of God that superseded the orthodox teachings, traditions, and authority of the early church. They believed that unless you had the exclusive knowledge that they had, then you were misinformed. Their teachings were dangerous because it took away from the supremacy of Christ's death and resurrection as all that was needed to be made right with God.

Story: My wife and I are different kinds of people in the kitchen. She loves to cook from a recipe in a cookbook with the exact ingredients that are listed in the recipe. Not me. I like to experiment a bit. I like to see what is in my cupboard and try and make something special with it. Upon first glance, it may seem like I don't have the things I need to create something tasty, but when I really begin to dive into what is in the kitchen, I can make some really good meals! In fact, some of the best meals I have ever made have been by using what I had and not what I wished I had.

Peter tells us that through faith in Jesus Christ, we have all of the tools and ingredients we need to love God, serve others, overcome sin, grow spiritually, and live a faithful life. Many Christians walk around frustrated because they think that they need more than God's promises of love and grace. Hear me today. You have everything you need. Quit relying on your own power and trust in God's divine power to transform you. It is all in you!

Peter continues with instruction for a full life.

READ 2 Peter 1:5-8

What do you notice about the way Peter continues this passage? It sounds like a recipe. Add to your bowl melted butter, two eggs, flour, sugar, etc. Similar to following a recipe for how to make chocolate chip cookies or some kind of cake, there are a number of items that we are invited to add to our faith in increasing measure in order to be effective in our knowledge of Jesus Christ.

So, what is our first ingredient to this not so secret sauce?

Peter says, "Add to your faith, goodness." This word goodness comes from the Greek word arete. Arete is an active word that means more than just being someone who avoids doing anything wrong. In fact, arete describes someone with virtue or moral

excellence. This person is someone who does gracious things and acts of good will unapologetically for all to see. Peter calls us to add to our faith real and intentional acts of pure goodness that are a blessing to others around us. This is the first ingredient to the full life of God. It's no secret, but many people never make the effort to do good in the world.

That is actually very sad, because perhaps the reason this is the first ingredient in the recipe is because it is actually fundamental to what it means to be created by God.

POINT #2 – YOU WERE CREATED TO DO GOOD

Paul picks up on this idea of goodness as he explains why God went to such great lengths to save us through Jesus Christ.

READ Ephesians 2:8-10

First, we are reminded that these good works are not the way in which we earn salvation. These good works are a response to the free gift of salvation that is offered in Christ. Jesus paid this price for our sin and won our freedom for us because we are his workmanship. Some translations say that we are His handiwork. God made us and He designed us in such a way that we can fulfill plans He has for us to do good in the world.

Illustration: (*have a lightbulb with you*) When all you have is natural light, productivity is limited to daylight hours. Light bulbs changed the world by allowing us to be active at night. According to historians, two dozen people were instrumental in inventing incandescent lamps throughout the 1800s; Thomas Edison is credited as the primary inventor because he created a completely functional lighting system, including a generator and wiring as well as a carbon-filament bulb like the one above, in 1879. (<https://www.livescience.com/33749-top-10-inventions-changed-world.html>) The light bulb was the handiwork of Mr. Edison, and there have been countless benefits and endless good that has come from that one creation.

Like the lightbulb, God created you with endless opportunities to bless the world around you. God planned these opportunities long ago, and our job is simply to be available to be used.

But, how do I find these opportunities for good you might ask?

Theologian Frederick Buechner once said, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

How has God wired you? What are you passionate about? What are you good at? What do you have to offer the world? When you can answer this question, then all you need to do is look for ways that the design of God within you can be used to bring good into the world.

I met a man from our church once who was a very talented builder and successful contractor. He decided one day to go on a mission trip to rebuild after the massive tornado that ripped through Birmingham, AL. Once there, he got hooked on building and constructing with a greater purpose. He felt himself come alive by adding goodness to his faith. He now has a non-profit that helps build homes for the homeless in our city. I know a mom whose kids are now out of the house and in college. She is a retired teacher and so with all the new time on her hands, she has created an after-school program at our church for at risk kids in our neighborhood. She has discovered the good

that God had planned for her long ago. (*Consider sharing your own personal example of people in your congregation using their gifts and passions for good.*)

It is no secret that God wants you to discover how to add to your faith in Him a practical goodness that has been placed in you before you were ever born.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself to help navigate this discovery:

Question 1 – What do people say I am good at?

Question 2 – What is something that I feel most alive doing?

Question 3 – What is a need within my family, community, or world?

Question 4 – What is something God cares deeply about?

Once you can answer these questions, consider how your responses intersect. This is where the full life of God is found.

POINT #3 – START COOKING

A good chef does not waste time in the kitchen. They know that there is a lot to accomplish in a recipe to get it from stove to table. Let's not waste any time in doing good in this life as well.

Story: Many years ago, I found myself stagnant in my life. I had grown bored with the things of God and did not see much use in following Jesus. I met with a mentor of mine one day for coffee, and he told me something that changed my life. He looked at me after I had shared some of my recent frustrations. He told me that I knew all the right things there were to know about the Christian faith. The problem was it had all gotten stuck in my head and never made it to my heart and then to my hands. He encouraged me to offer God my whole life and to pray for God to use me. It was not long after that prayer that I began to see a spark in my faith and a desire to want to serve God by serving others.

Sometimes we need someone who loves us to point us in the right direction, or an example to follow. Jesus has set the example as one who knew the reason for which He had come into the world. He lived His life with incredible intention because of it. He fed the hungry. He healed the sick. He preached the good news of the coming Kingdom. Jesus says it this way...

READ John 6:38

Jesus came to do the will of His father and to accomplish the good He was sent to do.

Begin here in your recipe for a Godly faith. What is one thing this week that you can do to bring some good into the world? Pray for God to give you opportunities and then take full advantage of them. It is not a secret sauce, and it is available to everyone if they are willing to bring good into the world.

PRAY