

Hello Orange Cove Church Family & Friends of Orange Cove,

### **Pastor's Weekly Letter: April 5, 2017 – "Atrophy"**

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Happy Wednesday, April 5, 2017. Here are the **PowerAds** for Orange Cove Church for this coming week:

- This coming Sabbath David Merritt will share the morning message during the worship service.
- This coming Sabbath is an Outreach Planning/Feedback Sabbath. We will meet after the fellowship luncheon to reflect on the outreach on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sabbath of March.
- This coming Sabbath, April 8, 2017, the children's choir will practice in the church after the fellowship luncheon.

### **This Week's Devotional – "Atrophy"**

Soon after I arrived in the United States, I applied for jobs in the fitness industry. I had 14 years experience in the fitness industry after having owned and managed a fitness center near Durban, South Africa. While I was interviewing for one of the personal fitness trainer jobs I applied for, the personal trainer told me something that shocked me. He said, "**Every year you live over the age of 25, you lose ½ a pound of muscle mass if you don't do regular weight training.**" That fact has stayed with me since that day. So, when I got a job at the North River YMCA in Hixson, Tennessee, I immediately started doing weight training. I pretty much kept it up over a 12 year period. Then something happened—actually, a few things happened. I got married and went overseas during my vacation time for 3 consecutive years, one month at a time. That break in my training made it hard to get back into. When you stop training for a month, you know you are weak and you lose motivation.

Then I picked up a calf injury. I stopped training for 3 years. I can't tell you what happened to me during those three years. I picked up 30 pounds; my posture became slumped over and I just looked real bad generally.

I was still a member at the YMCA during those 3 years, but I hardly went. I knew all the theory of weight training, I knew all the techniques, but I didn't practically do the exercise and the heavy lifting. So what happens to a body that is in active? What happens to a body that doesn't do any heavy lifting or engage in any movement? Yes, ATROPHY sets in. What is atrophy? Dictionary.com's definition of 'atrophy is: degeneration, decline, or decrease, as from **disuse**.

Could it be that many parts of the body of Christ are degenerating, declining or decreasing because of disuse? What was did we say was the purpose of the church? It was to continue Christ's mission of saving the world, right? So, if you and I, as parts of the body of Christ, are not actively engaged in Christ's mission of saving the world, we will be atrophying, right? How often do we think that the reason for us being engaged in Christ's mission of saving the world is because without us, the work won't be finished, right? Wrong! God will finish His work, with, or without us, but it's for our spiritual growth and our spiritual strength that it is crucial that we are actively engaged in Christ' mission of saving the world.

How will we be spiritually strong to stand in the end time? Well, we should have been in consistent training, right? When the end time comes, those who have been actively engaged in finishing God's work, will continue relying on God's Spirit and have learned to listen to His voice. They will be versed in the practices of standing for God in small things and therefore progressively strengthened to stand in bigger things. Bible study, prayer and church attendance without being actively engaged in finishing God's work would be like I was over that 3 year period as a member of the gym. I knew the routines and the weight-training techniques, but I never did any training. Note how the formula works as mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-15:

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,<sup>12</sup> for (1) the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, (2) for the edifying of the body of Christ,<sup>13</sup> till (3) we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man,(4) to the measure of the stature **of the fullness of Christ**:*

Note the role of church leadership---"equipping the saints for works of ministry." Why, to reach "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." My friends, we often resist full engagement in finishing God's work because we feel pressure from the pastor or pressure from a guilty conscience. We feel pressure that God's work is dependent on us, but we forget that WE NEED to be actively engaged in finishing God's work because it grows and matures us spiritually and gives us the strength to stand through the end time.

For us to reach "fullness in Christ," we need to understand His love and how His love practically serves and gives to others in the ministry of God's work of saving mankind. If we pray and ask God to lead us into actively being engaged in finishing His work, HE WILL ANSWER THAT PRAYER.