

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Be Thou My Vision by George Matheson

(Here is a passage to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer)

VERSE 1

Be thou my vision, O Lord my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

VERSE 2

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my great Father; thine own may I be,
Thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.

VERSE 3

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Thou and thou only first in my heart,
High king of heaven, my treasure thou art.

VERSE 4

High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Icebreaker

Did you have a spiritual mentor growing up? What are some characteristics of your mentor?

Text for Discussion: I Corinthians 1: 1-17

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Jesus embodies the good and beautiful life. Completely. He is the image of God but also the model for how we're created to live. Jesus and the way of the cross define what it means for people to flourish... yet so few act like this is the life we want. The path we walk is one directed towards personal glory rather than the cross. Paul's letter to the Corinthians addresses this, and it's just as relevant today as it was for its first readers nearly 2,000 years ago.

Corinth was the Los Angeles of its time: a thriving, cosmopolitan metropolis at the crossroads of the East and West, regularly visited by people from every corner of the empire. Promiscuity and prostitution were widespread as was recently acquired wealth. It was a relatively young city – ethnically, religiously, and socio-economically diverse – with materialistic, hyper-competitive, insecure citizens, hungry for status and obsessed with appearances. It should take little imagination to see Paul writing “To the Christians in Los Angeles” as we read his words!

Paul addressed two central problems in this letter. On the surface, the church in Corinth lacked unity. Believers became divided over which teacher (and teaching style) they preferred, just as we are prone to do today. But by celebrating any name in church other than Jesus, we deny the very One we say we've come to honor. The church's singular, undivided foundation is Christ, and our actions should honor our calling: making every effort to be agents of peacemaking, forgiveness, and reconciliation in our community. The moments we feel disappointed in each other is precisely where God can build authentic community. For it is through these times of conflict that loving relationships are forged, not in the absence of them.

But there is a deeper issue than not being a church united in the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16), which Paul seeks to address. We have received the Gospel, but it hasn't penetrated deeply enough. We value what Los Angeles values too much. We concern ourselves with the world's concerns, yearning to measure up to its standards. We seek comfort where our culture tells us it can be found. We belong to Christ... but we do not live that way. In light of the cross, we must completely reimagine what it means to live and thrive and flourish, or else the weeds of our culture will choke out the Word of the Gospel.

This is a worrisome truth if we forget how Paul begins this letter: in hope and in love. As critical as he is of the Corinthians (and us), Paul reminds us we are already safe and completely loved by our Father. We've already been saved by the grace of God, and it is from this place of security that we are called to live into who we are as His children. God's true and everlasting love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all thing” (1

Cor 13:7). We need only embrace our faithful Father and begin to more and more live into our new life in light of the cross.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What does the cross have to tell us about the art of living?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) Read I Corinthians 1:1-17. What stands out to you?
- 2) How have you experienced disappointment or division in Christian community in the past?
 - What would it look like to make every effort to be united in mind and spirit when dealing with conflict (Eph. 4:3)? Have you experienced this in the past?
 - What does it look like to have the mind of Christ?
- 3) **Guiding Question:** What does the cross have to tell us about the art of living?
 - Do you believe the path to the good and beautiful life is marked by humility, service, suffering and obedience? What is the disconnect between these ideals and how we actually live our lives?
 - Where have you seen growth in these areas in the past and how does that come about?
- 4) What are some things that we value in our culture that have seeped into the church?
 - How can we reimagine how we live in light of the cross?
 - How can we as a community help each other to only boast in Christ not in what the world values: power, personal glory and success?
- 5) What is one thing we can do between now and our next meeting to act on the reality of what we explored today?

Reflection

As the Fall semester kicks off, take some time to discuss what your desires, hopes and expectations are for the coming semester. Here are some questions to guide your conversation:

- What are your expectations for/from the group?
- What should be expected of you as a member?
- What are ways in which we can grow in honesty and transparency with one another?
- What would you like the group to look like at the end of the semester?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Thank God for His love and faithfulness to us.
- Pray that we would see our lives through the lens of the Gospel instead of through the world.
- Thank God that He has made us to live in community.