

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: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing by Robert Robinson

(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)

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing	Oh, that day when freed from sinning
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace	I shall see Thy lovely face
Streams of mercy, never ceasing	Clothed then in the blood washed linen
Call for songs of loudest praise	How I'll sing Thy wondrous grace
Teach me some melodious sonnet	Come, my Lord, no longer tarry
Sung by flaming tongues above	Take my ransomed soul away
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it	Send Thine angels now to carry
Mount of Thy redeeming love	Me to realms of endless day

Here I raise my Ebenezer
Here there by Thy great help I've come
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home
Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God
He, to rescue me from danger
Interposed His precious blood

Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be
Let that goodness like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it
Seal it for Thy courts above

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VERSE 3

Icebreaker

What's the difference in being happy with something and "boasting" in it?

Text for Discussion: I Corinthians 1:18-31

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Jesus shows us the life and character God intends for us all – one marked by humility and gentleness, a lack of selfish ambition, compassion, service above self, prayer, kindness and obedience, and suffering even to the point of death. This is the cruciform (cross-centered) way. Yet few of us believe this leads to the life we really want. Or we think it might, but our lives bear little resemblance to it. We've heard the Bible, but we aren't living like we understand it. Why?

The ways of the world are seductive, and its cultural values have seeped into our church community. There is more of Los Angeles in us than there is of Christ. We've become blind to the contrast between the wisdom of the world and the way of the cross, acting like their coexistence is entirely reasonable. We demand signs for God to prove (definitively and personally to us) that He is who He says He is. We seek the necessary wisdom to prove God fits into our standard of what's reasonable. We equate God's blessing with our own comfort, while any hardships leave us questioning or doubting. We see a blessed life as one where we are spared any suffering and where personal achievement leads to glory.

The cross has lost its power to offend us. Crucifixion was the most extreme, offensive form of punishment in the Roman world. We avoid how dire our condition must be that the Son of God had to die for us this way. So we ignore the cross's brutality, instead reducing it to a mere symbol of Christian art.

Above all, the cross is a statement about who God is and how God sees reality. Through the cross, God's wisdom exposes the emptiness of our value system and how we assume life should be lived. He deliberately overturns our

notions of achievement and success. “God chose what is foolish to shame the wise; God chose what is weak to shame the strong,” (1 Cor 1:27). Why did God do things this way?

Love and compassion. To the prideful, wise, and self-reliant, God yearns to strip away that which charms but can never deliver us. To the poor and downcast, God offers true wealth through the things that matter most. God did this so our hearts might learn to boast in the only thing that counts: the Lord. And the cross is the way to get there.

The cross tells us the truth about the world: that we’ll never find peace or deliverance when we seek our own glory. Our personal longings will never be enough to fulfill us. But in spite of all we’ve done – our mistakes, our shortcomings and sins – the cross promises something unimaginable: forgiveness. That is why the cross is such Good News to those who believe. Jesus has bound His life to ours so wholly that we no longer need to fear death. Death, which shapes and controls so many of our values because we fear it... yet the crucified Christ sets us free.

If we hope to become relevant in a society whose official creed is optimism and whose highest value is autonomy, we as Christians must turn to Jesus where He can be found: the cross. As He becomes the foundation of our identity, we show the world the hope and freedom He alone offers. In this way, we truly become the church of Christ.

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.)

How does the cross “tell us the truth” about ourselves and the world around us?

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 1:18-31. What stands out to you?
 - What did Paul see in the Corinthians’ way of life that was foolish? How is the Corinth way of life similar to our way of life?
- 2) What is the difference between seeing the cross primarily as “the place where Jesus died for my sins” and the cross as “a statement about the character of God”?
 - What should we value in light of the cross? What should we aspire toward, in light of the cross? What should we be ambitious about in light of the cross?
 - Where in your life are you saying “Yes God, but”...? Where are you needing to release control?
- 3) **Guiding Question:** How does the cross “tell us the truth” about ourselves and the world around us?
 - Specifically, how in the past week has the cross been “good news” to you?
- 4) What do you “boast” in? Is it in sync with your understanding of living in a Gospel mindset? Why or why not?
 - How can we as a community help each other to only boast only in Christ not in what the world values?
- 5) What is one thing we can do between now and our next meeting to act on the reality of what we explored today?

Application Practice

Since humility (i.e. boasting in the cross) is about identity, let’s try a one week experiment...

This week, do one “unknown” act of service for someone. Come back to the group next week ready to share about your experience with that act.

- Where/How was it challenging?
- What/How did it show you more about the “good and beautiful life” of the way of Jesus?
- What impact did the act of service and its pre and post processing impact your soul/spirit?

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 that He loved us so much that He sent His son to die on the cross for our sins.
- Pray that we would see the world as God sees the world.
- Pray that we would be thankful even when going through suffering and trials.