

The Cruciform Life: Revealed by the Spirit

Oct. 1, 2017

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: Listening Prayer

(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)

Open by spending 5 minutes in silence, asking God to give you the mind of Christ. Have each group member spend the 5 minutes alternating between praying the simple prayer, “God, give me the mind of Christ” and listening for how the Holy Spirit speaks to them. Ask people to pay attention to thoughts that God might bring to them regarding parts of their thinking or actions in the past 24 hours where they have not had the mind of Christ, and parts of their thinking or actions in the past 24 hours where they have had the mind of Christ. Close out the time by reading the following from I John 5:14-15:

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.”

Icebreaker

Have several people tell a story about a time when they expected an experience to go one way, but it went a very different way (i.e., a meeting at work, a date, a family gathering, etc.).

- How did you respond in the moment? What did you do to make a shift so that you could “lean in” to what was happening?
- When you think about this, what does it tell you about how we change our minds about something? This session is all about shifting our mindset...

Text for Discussion: I Cor. 2:1-16

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

The cross of Christ is not just an event; it is a way of life, radically different from the way of the world. While our world prizes talent and success, Jesus points us to a way of weakness and humility. These ways of being are at odds with one another, moving our hearts in very different directions. For while the world may view it as foolish, the way of the cross reveals the wisdom and power of God.

How do we know if we’re living as the world does rather than the way of the cross? It’s as simple as looking at what we value and whom we admire. Los Angeles doesn’t hide its admiration for success, beauty, wealth and fame. These things are foundational to our city. And it’s so easy to be swept up into! The people who impress us reveal the qualities we think lead to success and significance. Not only do we attempt to lift ourselves up through what we believe makes us special; we also inappropriately elevate others as celebrities and idols.

The way of the cross strips us of anything we might hold onto to give us status or significance. It means that before God, we are all the same, with no reason or means to boast. In God’s world, He alone is the hero; Jesus stands alone to be celebrated. But how do we live into this? The key to living the cruciform (cross-centered) life is not willpower, self-denial or moral courage. The key is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit reveals what God has already given us as well as all we will one day more fully receive (1 Cor 2:9-10). Faith produced by the Holy Spirit allows us to not only feel these truths – we believe them. It is the Holy Spirit who speaks to us as we look at the cross and hear, “Jesus loves me.” Through the Holy Spirit we have an actual glimpse of the boundless love of our Father, and find the ability to respond to His Love with love. From here, our priorities and needs can fundamentally change. Our efforts no longer need to be the root of change because the greatest thing about us... is no longer us! God’s love for us is our foundation, and that is enough.

The way of the cross is a life of weakness and humility rather than one based on our strengths and abilities. We are dependent on the Holy Spirit, but we're not passive. We still pursue this way of life. How?

We can stop boasting and embrace our weaknesses. Rather than brag, self-promote and protect our image, we can adopt a posture of repentance, knowing we are sinners in need of grace. We can apologize, taking ownership of our shortcomings and sin. We can ask for help, sharing our needs. We can appreciate failure while being cautious of success.

We can pray. Prayer is looking to God as our source and our strength. It is a posture of reliance and need. And in prayer, we can ask the Holy Spirit to further reveal the reality of God's sufficiency.

We can look at the cross. We can repent of our sins and claim forgiveness. We can meditate on the all that Christ has secured for us: an inheritance of forgiveness, redemption, adoption and glory. And as we look at the cross, we can listen for the Holy Spirit to say, "Jesus loves me."

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 are the differences between "the wisdom of the world" and "the mind of Christ"?

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.)

Opening questions...

- Take turns reading through the entire passage -- 2:1-16.
- Read 2:1-5 again. Why do you think it was necessary for Paul to write these somewhat unexpected words to the Corinthians?
- Do you think there is anything wrong with "wise and persuasive words"?
- How would you describe the wisdom of the Spirit?

Digging Deeper...

- Read vs. 9-10 again. How exactly does God reveal things to us by the Spirit?
 - Can you share a story of a time that the wisdom of the Spirit was revealed to you? How did you know it was from God?
 - In your worship/prayer time at the beginning of the session, did you sense that God was speaking anything to you through the Holy Spirit? How did you recognize His voice?
- Read vs. 14 again. Do you think this statement is meant to apply to every person in every situation? Why or why not?
- Read vs. 16 again. What is included in "the mind of Christ"?
 - Try an exercise together. Have three people in the group read the following three passages. As they read, have the group make a list of characteristics of the mindset you hear in the passages.
 - Philippians 4:4-9
 - Eph. 5:15-20
 - Matthew 5:3-12
 - After making the list, have everyone create a one-sentence statement about what it means to "have the mind of Christ."

Application Question...

- What three things from the list you made stand out most to you as things you need to "lean into" at this moment to help you respond to what is happening to you with "the mind of Christ" as opposed to "the wisdom of the world"?

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.)

Pray for each other based on the three things listed above; commit to praying for one thing on the list of the person on your right during the coming week.

Experiment of the Week

- Have each person write down the three things listed above on an index card. Place the card in a place where you will see it every day (i.e., car windshield, bathroom mirror, desk at work, etc.).

- Each time you see the card this week, say a “bullet prayer” asking God to give you the mind of Christ in that area.
- Before your next group session, write a paragraph to read to the group (everyone reading will be the opening of the next session) about how God has spoken to you in this exercise.