

# CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

March 14, 2010



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Reconciliation

## Series: A New Allegiance A New Community

The desire for a deeper and more genuine community has been one of the major catalyst in the renewal of America's urban centers. Or at least that's what we say on paper. There is a great desire for such community but few of us have ever experienced such fellowship. We say that we want to be known and for others to know us, but at our core we have to ask "is this the truth?" This week it was proposed "Is it possible to maintain relationships where I can enjoy and be enjoyed by others?" This aspiration is obviously the end-game but we rarely pause to examine the cost. The price we pay for such community cuts to the core of our identity. If anything other than Christ is our identity we will fight to the death to protect it and this has a direct impact on the quality of community we can experience. Consumed by protecting our success, reputation, and image we stunt and sometimes even curtail our chance at authentic relationship. But as

Bonhoeffer so poignantly states, "The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us." In the gospel of Christ we realize our great spiritual poverty. This bankruptcy, what the bible calls sin, is the human error of trying to find life in other things besides God. It may be obvious to us that our work, the way we parent, or the color of our skin can never provide us with the answers to the deepest questions of our soul and yet we allow such things to keep us from the answers. Justified in Christ our glory is restored and upheld. As a result we are set free from the awful trap of attempting to "one-up" others for the sake of self esteem. Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, we are able to clothe ourselves in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Most of the

time though we fail to wear such clothing. Instead we clothe ourselves in shame. Our sin is not merely the breaking of rules or even an offense that affects others. Rather, the grievousness of our sin cuts right at the heart of God and as we sin against others, we ultimately wound God himself and in a very personal way. The gravity of our sin now comes into full focus as we begin to realize that God is not merely transcendent, but he is at the same time uniquely personal. So how do you deal with people who hurt or disappoint you? Do you attack or avoid? If so you might be operating from a position of insecurity. But the security that Christ offers gives us the ability to lovingly engage those who have left us wounded. In the face of righteous critique we can be humbly molded. Yet at the same time we can securely reject criticism that is unrighteous and misdirected. This week may we be reconciled to others as we are reconciled in Christ.

# Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

## Application Questions: Colossians 3:10-17

1. Describe both the desire for and the reality of community in our Eastside culture.
2. What is the relationship between our identity and how we treat others? How does a relationship with Christ shape our identity and subsequently our relationship to others?
3. Read the Bonhoeffer quote in the side margin. Discuss the cost and benefits of a “genuine and deeper community”. Give some examples of how you have experienced this in your own life. Moreover, how does Christ enable such community?
4. Read verses 12-14 again. Why is an understanding of the forgiveness of God necessary for true forgiveness with one another? How does our mistreatment of others impact our relationship with God?
5. How do you typically deal with people who hurt or disappointment you? How did the sermon either affirm or challenge your approach to conflict?
6. When we are hurt we often attack or avoid our offender. How is this ultimately destructive for everyone? How does Christ enable loving engagement?

I have community with others and I shall continue to have it only through Jesus Christ. The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us. We have one another only through Christ, but through Christ we do have one another, wholly, and for all eternity.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## The Lenten Journey: Giving

Giving is one of topics most avoided by pastors and least discussed amongst the church. We live in a society of non-profits looking for donations via mailer and even sometimes door-to-door. The outstretched hand can become commonplace and the challenge is keeping our heart in tune with a rich theology of giving.

The season of Lent serves as the perfect occasion for us to refocus our thoughts around giving and no better place for our reflections than Jesus' wilderness journey. At its essence, the experience highlights core idolatries; control, approval, power, and comfort. In many ways Satan was tempting Christ to pursue control, approval, and power for the sake of comfort. Yet, this would be one of many choices that Christ would make to forsake the creature comforts of heaven for the grim realities of his broken earth. Here we have an interesting intersection of interests. On the one hand we have the evil pretender to the throne believing that his empire is gaining influence and strength, reaching its pinnacle by tempting the promised messiah. If the Son of God were to bow the knee, the game would be called. But, unbeknownst to Satan, the kingdom of light was not making its final stand. Sure, the gauntlet had to be won but there was no question of who would prevail as victor. This desert duel was nothing more than an precursor of a future battle, a final battle, when all the darkness would be taken away. The denial of Christ is not applicable to Judas only, but to Christ himself. For in denying all that truly belonged to Him the kingdom mission prevailed.

As you read this you're probably wondering, "So what does this have to do with giving?" Everything. Ask yourself "what is my heart towards money?" Do I look to it for control, approval, or power? We all use money in this way to ultimately, in some form or fashion, secure comfort for ourselves. Examining our heart towards giving and the practice of giving during the season of Lent is a pathway to freedom. Becoming more faithful in our tithes and offerings or giving financial resources towards a need in our community makes an incredibly bold statement. It is a statement of worship unto the one true living God. In giving, we deny money (oddly enough a lifeless object) the abilities of control, approval, and power. We proclaim that these things belong to God alone and in him alone we can trust. God, grant us a heart to give ourselves away and experience the liberation of your kingdom. Place eternity in our hearts. Amen.

