

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Remodeling the Church: The Family Focused Church**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - January 16, 2011**

As we work through this series on 'Remodeling the Church' I am reminded that it is always good in a remodeling project to step back for a second look around at what is still good. In our church remodeling going on right now we are recycling as much as we can to be good stewards. As we apply this metaphor to our church this month and chase the idea of becoming the Church that God is asking us to become, it is a good time to look inward; to take an inventory of what is good. It is tricky isn't it? We have said, quoting from the Philippians 3 passage (Vs. 13-14); that it is *best not to look back with regret* – **"But one thing I do: *Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*"**

On the other hand God is a *God who asks us to remember*. In Revelation 2 verses 4 and 5 the beloved disciple John records the words of the Lord saying to the church in Ephesus **"But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. <sup>5</sup>Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent."**

So as Christ Followers we remember appropriately, not locked in on the past or ritually repeating the past but instead remembering God and his priorities and his faithfulness so that we can instead lock in on the future - straining toward what is ahead in the upward call.

Take out your 4Cs bookmarks for a moment. I want to start at the top words because the first words are really some very defining words - that we are **a family focused church**. Not that this is all that we are but certainly 'family' has been at the core of Christ Community Covenant since her birth. So let's take a look at this idea as we explore the church we are straining forward to be. The church that we are becoming. So we use this morning to look at ourselves with this family thought in mind.

Do you sometimes raise an eyebrow just a little bit when you hear some one say, "I want to speak frankly now," as though a moment ago they were speaking in some coy and deceptive fashion? Or when someone says, "Can I be honest with you?" as though previously they had been lying through their teeth. Well, today I would like to speak frankly and honestly. Earnestly. In a moment I will begin sharing bedrock Biblical truths about life and family. All of us will be touched, maybe even quickened to the soul because we have failed to live up to these great foundational truths. I know as I have been in preparing for this sermon - I realize how seriously I have failed. We all have, but we can all be comforted. The truths we share this morning are meant to heal and to point us forward, as a church and as fellow family members.

I want to start this morning with the idea of Life. God is the God of Life, first and foremost.

<b>The God of Life</b>
------------------------

<b>Deuteronomy 30:11-14, 19-20</b>
------------------------------------

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.
---

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. <b>Now choose life, so that you and your children may live</b>
--

and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life.

Do you hear the family value in these passages; “**Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.**” **Life and family has always gone hand in hand.** Some see this passage as an option, as though God was saying “You can pick the consequences, it’s your choice.” I see it more as a command. “I am commanding you” he says in verse 11 (that is pretty clear to me) to “so choose life” in verse 19. Physical life certainly but I believe that this refers to all forms of life; emotional life, a healthy social and mental life, and of course an abundant spiritual life. Then Jesus says,

**John 10:10**

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

We sometimes refer to family ministries in terms like “cradle to grave.” ‘Family ministry’ necessarily starts with life. It must. In fact, in many ways family starts even before a baby is conceived - often with the simple idea of a ‘someday baby’ that is prayed for and saved for, learned about and talked about. I would guess that millions of marriages did not happen because before conception an engaged man and woman disagreed about children and family. Family is intended to protect and nourish life. Within family, life is conceived and matured and informed. One of the most obvious ways you can tell difference between Satan - who is the thief - and God who is the ultimate Giver, is by their attitudes about life. As we have just read, the thief/liar, kills and destroys but God gives life.

This is Sanctity of Life week scheduled to coincide with the anniversary of Row V Wade in 1973, 37 years ago. Since then about 50 million abortions in the US alone have been performed. I believe that breaks God’s heart. Let’s put that number in perspective. 50 million would be like the sum total of the following state populations:

Kentucky, Oregon, Oklahoma, Connecticut, Iowa, Mississippi, Arkansas, Kansas, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, West Virginia, Nebraska, Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, Hawaii, Rhode Island, Montana, Delaware, South Dakota, Alaska, North Dakota, Vermont, Wyoming.

"A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members and among the most vulnerable are surely the unborn, the elderly and the dying."  
~Pope John Paul II (also Mahatma Gandhi, Herbert Humphrey, D Bonhoeffer, Pearl S. Buck)

I want to speak tenderly here; many, even most in our congregation have been impacted directly by this terribly difficult choice of abortion. Statistically in a group this size, 70% of us have either directly or indirectly experienced the impact of abortion. Healing is difficult and forgiveness and consolation can feel so distant. The messages in the world are confusing so sometimes we don’t know what to think and feel. In a bit I will close today speaking about the glad truth of God’s desire to bring deep personal healing into the brokenness that may fill our souls. Still as Christians we must be forthright. As Christians, we don’t have the luxury of speaking with vagueness, ambiguity, and cliché. Colossians 4:3 and 4 tells us that when we open our mouths on God’s behalf we must speak clearly.

But before we try to **speak clearly**, we should first **think and feel clearly** about difficult and controversial moral issues. First and foremost we need to realize that abortion is not mainly about a woman’s right to choose. And it isn’t mainly about a baby’s right to life. It is not political but profoundly spiritual. Abortion is about God, the Creator of the universe, the Giver and Sustainer of all life. Abortion is about God. To leave God out of the picture of abortion is to trivialize it.

Of course, all things are trivial without God. God is the ultimate reality over the universe and ultimate judge over that which is moral and immoral. While we might flatter ourselves with various opinions, finally, only God's opinion matters. Better to know His thoughts on morality than to hazard a guess based on, "Well, I just don't feel that way" or "We are all entitled to our opinions but personally, I see it differently." If we leave him out of the moral equation, we will know nothing of any lasting significance about ourselves or the world.

I can speak boldly about this "live value" because God speaks boldly about this. Here is some of what we know about God and human life from God's own lips; his Word:

**Genesis 1:27:** "God created man in his own image."

**Psalms 139:13-16:** "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."

David is saying that he was *made by God*, that he was created *while still in the womb*. God is the one who designed him, making him *unique* and *special*.

**Jeremiah 1:5:** "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you."

**Galatians 1:15:** "And when he who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace."

Let me say again this is a subject that is attended by broken and breaking hearts. Our grandparents and our teens and every age in between have all been affected. And just as we have all been affected there is healing and grace and mercy for all of us too. We will talk more about that.

There is a table in the back where you can receive some literature and I would be happy to chat this through with you. But let's keep moving pressing forward toward the upward call in our pursuit of God's family focused priorities. Because it is important to remember that not only is God the God of life but he is the God of young life as well.

## The God of Children

### Luke 18:15-17

Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

And God asked us as parents and family members to remember God and his statutes and to teach our children all the time.

### Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Because Jesus broke rank with the social norms of his day by embracing and loving children so too these young lives are important to this church just as they are to God. We have to be careful though. You know sometimes I think we define a 'family focused church' as one that has lots of

really robust programming for children and teens. If there are lots of children then it must be family focused, right? And that for sure is part of it. But to be consistent with this verse from Deuteronomy, a truly family focused church would be mostly about helping parents to be the primary *truth tellers* in the lives of their children. Parents - not the church - are to be the primary *character givers* and the primary *sex educators*. First and foremost, parents are responsible for what their children know in truth about God and his love. It is possible that great children's programs could paint the wrong picture - that the church can do the job and the parents can therefore relax. That would be wrong, very wrong. We do pretty well around here with that, we certainly mean well! But we could do better at helping resource you parents. One of the improvements that will be a part of the church that we are becoming as we focus on the family is to better equip and champion you as parents and grandparents as you share the core truth of God's life and love to your children and teens.

Of course 'family focused ministry' doesn't stop there.

### The God of Marriage

#### Genesis 2:18-25

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;

she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

There is a core curriculum that is God's design for marriage in this passage. See if you see these non-negotiables; **heterosexual, monogamous, inseparable, intimate and unashamed**. The world we live in seeks to redefine marriage but again marriage is as much about whom God is as it is about whom we are. We cannot tamper with the definition of marriage without also tampering with our understanding of who God is. And just let me say again – here is another area of heartbreak and sadness. Some have lost their beloved and their loss is inconsolable. Some have never been married and their pain is deep and desperate. Some are struggling through marriages that are breaking and others can barely breathe for the pain of divorce and broken dreams. Again, God's truth is firm but his mercy and healing is for all of us who experience life that is different from God's best.

### The God of the Church Family

Finally, right now we are working to refresh our family focus here at 4Cs and we see this remodeling project as an opportunity for us to power forward with this heightened sense of coming alongside our families. More and more you will hear words like 'intergenerational' – a ministry design that puts youth and children and adults in one room more often so that cross generational church family relationships can take form easier. You remember three weeks ago the concern I raised about the youth of our nation and especially our young men dropping out of church when they graduate from high school at nearly a 90% rate. Maybe that won't happen so much if we know and love our extended church family members better.

We will continue our robust youth programming but we want to also increasingly instill lasting relationships throughout the church family. You will remember this verse perhaps:

**Matthew 19:29-30**

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

This speaks to the church. Remember how Amanda spoke of a young person who was a part of High Point Student Ministries and shared at the Thanksgiving service of her deep appreciation for our church and how sad Amanda was that probably no adult at 4Cs knew who she was. Her parents didn't care about her Christian faith; she came alone. This kind of thing just can't happen. She should have had 100 fold parents, and as we press on as a church we hope to find better ways to love our spiritual 'orphans.'

**The God of Forgiveness and Mercy**

I am compelled by scripture to tell the truth as God tells it. I do that to the best of my heart and mind and strength every Sunday. But I am also compelled by scripture to tell the truth in love and in this broken world of deep disappointment and shattered dreams and mind numbing regret there is also grace and mercy and hope and forgiveness.

Jesus knew. He said it all when he said in the world you will have tribulations but he also said "Take heart I have overcome the world." He said "I will be with you always" even in the valley of the shadow of death he promised to be there. Our world is often a stream of broken promises and shattered dreams. But Matthew records in Chapter 11 that Jesus said to those who followed him "**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest**" (Matthew 11:28).

Consider the great sinner Peter - maybe he should be known as Peter the Betrayer. If ever there was a man who knew something about shame and disappointment it was Peter who on the night Jesus was betrayed denied him three times in Jesus' hour of deepest need. But Peter also knew first hand what it meant to be personally restored by Jesus so that he was able to exhort us in his very personal first letter to "**cast all your cares upon Him, because he cares for you.**" You can be restored too; you can have hope that does not disappoint and a peace that passes understanding. There is no sin or sadness that God cannot forgive and heal. Let's claim that now in prayer.

**Prayer**